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ASSISTANTS AT THE PASSION

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ASSISTANTS AT THE PASSION

By the

REV. H. F. B. MACKAY

Author of 'Saints and Leaders'

LONDON

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THESE addresses were given at All Saints, Margaret Street, during Lent and in Holy Week. Some have appeared in the *Church Times*, some in the *All Saints' Parish Paper*, others have not been printed before. They aim at sketching scenes in the story of the Passion and some of the men and women who had a share in it.

They suggest that the story of the Passion is an everyday story, that its elements may always be found in human society, that men and women continue to stand in varying relations to it, and that it is for each of us to determine what his own relation shall be.

H. F. B. M.

Chapter I

THE OWNERS OF THE ASS'S COLT

Straightway he will send them.—St. Matthew xxi., part of verse 3.

S you may remember, in Palestine at the present time a partial quietude is spread over three days in every week. The Mohammedans keep Friday as a day of rest, the Jews Saturday and the Christians Sunday, and when one reaches Bethany at noon on Palm Sunday one does not only bring the Palm Sunday feeling with one, there is something of it in the air.

But on the first Palm Sunday there was no Palm Sunday feeling in the air. It was a working day, and, as being one of the days before the Passover, a day of feverish activity. The Palm Procession did not take place along a silent countryside. There

were streams of pilgrims going along the road all day. It was the biggest demonstration that day, but many cheery caravans passed by, and many songs were sung. Bethany slopes down from west to east on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Looking down eastward over the huge, descending sweeps of wild, stone-strewn country to the profound depths of the Jordan, there is a great sense of being on the edge of the world, a great sense of air and space. It is very difficult to believe that a big city is close by, hidden by the intervening hill at one's back. It is a double hill. There are really two Mounts of Olives, a western and an eastern, joined at the north end by a narrow col and with a deep combe lying in the middle. The Mount of Olives is like an elongated horseshoe, lying north and south, with Jerusalem opposite the west side of one prong of the horseshoe and Bethany on the eastern side of the other; the valley between the prongs is narrow.

Here lay the little village of Bethphage. This deep combe comes out on the south where the road from Bethany to Jerusalem crosses the end of it. The road sweeps round the southern shoulders, first of the eastern Mount of Olives and then of the western. It climbs the western mount rather steeply, and it is at a sharp and sudden turn on the south shoulder of the western mount, about three-quarters of a mile from the place where the by-road from Bethphage joins the big main road, that Jerusalem bursts suddenly and dramatically into sight.

It was on the early afternoon of Palm Sunday that our Lord and His disciples set out from Bethany. The more excited part of the Palm Procession were the people who came out from Jerusalem to greet Him, and who probably met Him near the turning to Bethphage. Our Lord seems to have left Bethany on foot, but amid an increasing crowd. He had sent two of His disciples on ahead, with precise directions

to take a particular ass's colt, which they would find, with its mother beside it, at a certain point in the village of Bethphage, and to ask the loan of it for His service. Bethphage lay well off the main road, up in the combe, and it is easy to picture the episode: the two vigorous men walking rapidly into the quiet village street and looking keenly about them, the discovery of the animals tied up in the shade, the quick loosing of them, and the inevitable challenge: 'What do you mean by untying our animals?' And the answer, 'The Lord needs them this afternoon'; and then the hasty response, 'We are delighted He should have the loan of them, delighted; the day is hot, the sun is strong; doubtless the Rabbi is fatigued by His pilgrimage. The Rabbi is a very wonderful man; we have gained great good from His preaching. May He reward us for our loan with His help if we fall sick. Take the animals, beg the Rabbi's blessing for their owners, and may God be with you.'

ASSISTANTS AT THE PASSION

In this chapter I propose to consider the Owners of the Colt; the Servant with the Pitcher will follow, and then will come the Goodman of the House. I propose to take them as figures symbolical of the attitudes of three groups of persons towards our Lord in His Passion. These minor figures can only be taken symbolically, because we do not know enough about them to treat them as living characters.

I invite you, then, to consider now the owners of the ass's colt as kindly people who gave some equipment to our Lord for His journey to His Passion, but who stayed behind themselves.

Let us see the good points of such people. They were kindly, courteous, neighbourly, delighted to do a good turn. No doubt they had the same satisfaction in sending the ass's colt that a number of amiable, self-indulgent people had during the war in lending their motor-cars to take the wounded for drives. Numbers and numbers of people

were helping then with precisely the same measure of self-sacrifice as that exhibited by the owners of the ass's colt. They were enjoying the sensation of being kind and patriotic.

But the owners of the colt were not merely good-natured in this epicurean manner. They were a good deal better than that. Our Lord was a much-disputed character, and they had evidently, to a large extent, taken our Lord's side in the dispute. This was not difficult in Galilee, but in Jerusalem it meant some real sympathy, and that probably at the expense of a certain amount of social inconvenience. Many of you know how trying it is, very often, to go to an early service when you are staying for a week-end in the country. Something uncomfortable is in the atmosphere. When you enter the breakfast-room, your host talks rather loudly as he gives you the choice of the hot dishes, and there is a certain acidity and dryness in your hostess's tone as she hopes you have not caught a chill in the Church,

which the rector never will keep warm enough. No one could take our Lord's part, in any degree, near Jerusalem without meeting social disagreeables even greater than these. No, to have a general sympathy with our Lord meant allying oneself to some little extent with the people who had a sense of spiritual need, who were dissatisfied with the satisfactions of the world of sense, who found the centre of their aspirations in the region of spiritual ideals. And it also meant what so many of you dread in the restless dissatisfied society of to-day: it meant arguing for Christ in a dispute at luncheon, or at dinner. It meant sometimes, at least, asserting a belief that He might after all substantiate His claim; it meant a readiness to help Him and His work, up to a certain point.

Yes, but what is His work? It is the redemption of the human race; it is reparation for the sin of the world; and any real co-operation with that involves far more than the sympathetic friendliness of the

owners of the ass's colt. It is not enough, when Christ enters Jerusalem at the beginning of the Sacred Passion, to send the animal on which He rides, and to stay behind oneself. It is not enough to equip Him materially and no more. Let us all reflect how many do that and no more, and let each ask himself, 'Lord, is it I?'

It is not too much to say that a great deal of trouble is taken, a great deal of hard work is done, a great many, a very great many, cheques are written and sent in charity, in order that the man who takes the trouble, the man who writes the cheques, may salve his conscience, while he shirks going with Christ to Jerusalem. Roughly speaking, it is women who do Christian work in order to avoid following Christ to Jerusalem; it is men who write cheques for the same reason.

Oh! not altogether for that reason; no, that is too harshly said; but with the fatal query mixed up with the Christian motive, 'I hope this may do instead.'

The owners of the ass's colt could not be expected to know the full significance of the Palm Procession to Jerusalem. Nobody knew it that day except our Lord. Those who went the whole way with Christ went the whole way, not because they understood, but because their devotion to His sacred Person took them wherever He went.

We have less excuse; we know. We know that Christ goes to Jerusalem to make reparation for the sin of the world, and we know that there is no room for second-best service in that movement.

Reparation for the sin of the world! All the age-long attempts at reparation by the offender had failed, and at last, in the fullness of time, it is made by One Who has no share in the offences, and Who is able to offer perfect sorrow for the sin of the world. The principle of vicarious reparation pervades human life through and through. During the war brave young lives were laid down in reparation for the short-comings of

a nation which preferred ease and plenty, golf, cricket and football, to organising the defence of the Empire God had given it. Mankind receives its benefits collectively; it suffers collectively; it sins collectively; it makes reparation collectively; and it is to make the reparation of us poor sinners effective, by the one perfect offering of Himself once offered, that our Lord, our creator and our sustainer, rode to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

For the Passion does not mean that because Christ suffered I need not; because He atoned I have no more to do. If I come into vital relation with the tremendous event of this week, I come first by appropriating its merits by faith, and then by thinking the Redeemer's thoughts, saying His words and doing His deeds. I come by identifying myself wholly with the Sacred Passion in the appointed ways. In other words, I cannot send Christ to Jerusalem. I must go too. I must go through with it.

There is a good deal I can send with Christ

without going myself—my interest, appreciation, homage, enthusiasm, money, labour. But I must go myself. It is not enough to speed the good cause. I must go through with it.

A last picture. Half way down the Bethphage valley a little group is standing. They are the owners of the ass's colt. They are shading their eyes and watching. They are watching the high road which crosses the end of the valley. A procession is being formed there; boughs of olive and palm are being brandished; brightly coloured cloaks are being waved like flags and are now cast down to make a carpet. Raised above the crowd, on the draped colt, the figure of the Lord slowly passes by, until it is hidden by the shoulder of the western spur of the mount. On the still afternoon air, the shouts of 'Hosanna' ring softly from side to side of the valley.

'What a pretty sight!' say the owners. 'I am so glad we lent the colt'; and there are actually tears in their eyes.

The point is this: those tears are no good.

Chapter II

THE SERVANT WITH THE PITCHER

And he sendeth forth two of his disciples and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.—St. Mark xiv. 13.

IT was the morning of Maundy Thursday, and you do not realise the feelings of the Apostles that morning if you forget that for thirty-six hours they had been facing the proposition, 'It is all over; the mission of the Master is at an end.'

On Tuesday night our Lord had broken off the mission and left the Temple courts for ever. There had been a tremendous last moment when, standing in the Court of the Gentiles (perhaps at the head of the steps which led down and down through the enormous foundations out into the Kedron valley), He had denounced the false

religion which had blinded the eyes and hardened the hearts of His own who had received Him not; and then His voice had faltered into the great lamentation: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee!' And so he went down through the twilight of the staircases to the dark gate which was called the Gate of Obscurity, and the Temple saw Him no more. Far on into the night He had sat with His Apostles under the brilliant moonlight on the high edge of the Mount of Olives, and had looked across the black depths of the Kedron to the incomparable vision of the Temple and the great mansions on Mount Zion, appearing in the moonlight like a city of ivory, ebony and silver. Then He had spoken of the last things, and of such times as soon were coming upon the city, times which heralded the last things.

We have no record that He spoke great

words again until He had reached the Upper Chamber. There is a silence of nearly forty hours in the middle of Holy Week. Once before, at Cæsarea Philippi, when He had spoken of His death, there had been days of silence and dismay. But then they were in a lonely place, where they could bury their distress in solitude; but now the crisis was upon them, and this unbearable silence of the Master was silence in the midst of a crowd. That double hill, the Mount of Olives, was alive with people day and night. It was like Hampstead Heath on Saturday afternoon, but a Hampstead Heath upon which the people slept in tents or under the moon, rolling themselves in their cloaks. It is generally thought that our Lord and the Apostles spent the nights of Holy Week in the open, on the eastern slope of the eastern hill, the slope which looks down on Bethany, and from which He could see the flat roof under which the Blessed Virgin slept. How He spent the Wednesday we

do not know, but there were no great utterances. It was this silence and comparative inaction which brought Judas to the point. He was quite clear now that His Master had deceived him, and before nightfall he had visited the city on some pretext and had made his bargain with the authorities.

And now it was Maundy Thursday, and the day before the Passover. Nothing could be more significant of the disorder into which all their affairs had fallen than that up to the eleventh hour no preparations had been made for the Feast. At last the disciples break into their Master's awful silence: 'Where wilt Thou that we prepare to eat the Passover?' He tells them that He will give His directions to Peter and John.

It was a long walk from that farther ridge of the Mount of Olives to one of the city gates lying to the south of the Temple area, and below the steep streets of Mount Zion. Down in the valley, by the city gate, was a well. Let us watch the scene at the

well through the eyes of Ober-Ammergau. As the two men approach the gate, Baruch, the servant of the goodman of the house, comes out with a pitcher to draw water from the well—water to be used in the preparation for the Passover. Crowds are passing in and out, and the good Baruch is greatly exhilarated. 'There is a great deal of business to-day,' he says; 'there will be no lack of work this Passover; from the great crowd of pilgrims we can't expect anything else. My master must be expecting a great many guests, as he is already making such a stir in the house.'

He begins to draw the water. Peter and John stop and look at him. 'Yes,' they say, 'there is a young man at the well; that looks like him.'

'There must be something exceptional at this Passover,' says Baruch to himself, still filling his pitcher, 'seeing the way in which the Council are hastening about this way and that.'

He lifts his pitcher and turns to go.

'This is the man,' says Peter, 'the man carrying the pitcher of water that we are to follow.'

'Let us follow him,' says John.

Up the steep streets they go, and reach the spot the exact locality of which is still preserved to us, now covered by a monastery church turned into a mosque, then the spacious dwelling-house of a well-to-do man. At the door Baruch turns, and sees two people approaching whom he supposes to be his master's guests. 'Will you come in with me, friends?' he says. 'You are welcome.'

'We want to speak to your master,' says John.

'Perhaps you are coming to eat the Passover with us?'

'Yes,' says Peter, 'the Master gave us a message about this to your master.'

'Then,' says Baruch, 'come with me. It will be a joy to my master to take you

into his house. See, here he is himself. Master, I bring guests.'

'Welcome, strangers,' says the goodman. 'How can I serve you?'

And Peter replies: 'Our Teacher sent us to say unto you, "Where is My hostelry, where I can eat the Passover with My disciples, for My time is at hand? I will keep the Passover in your house with My disciples."'

I take Baruch the servant, with the pitcher of water, and make him the object of your contemplation. I take him as the symbol of all dutiful servants of the human family and of religion. As such he performs, in the course of his simple, laborious, daily tasks, a signal service to our Lord in the Sacred Passion. We have considered the kindly, sympathetic person who gives our Lord a subscription, but does not give himself. Baruch is the man who gives himself in simple duty as far as he knows how. Such a man is not, of course, necessarily a

Christian at all. These servants of the Sacred Passion exist in all religions. The Buddhist, the Mohammedan, the Brahmin, the Parsee, the Shintoist, who faithfully, dutifully, laboriously lives up to the highest he knows, is a far better servant of the Passion than the English squire who gives his rector cheques for Church expenses and the parish hall on the tacit understanding that nothing more personal will be demanded of him by Jesus Christ.

But who are the Christians who correspond to Baruch? They are the people who are strictly faithful to all their obligations; to the obligations of Catholic Christian life and of secular life.

'Going with Christ to Jerusalem, instead of sending Him there—what will that involve for me?' a man asks. The figure of Baruch answers the question—or, at least, partially answers it, for the goodman of the house completes the answer.

'You must be a servant fulfilling your

service,' says Baruch, 'the servant of the Church.' Baruch was carrying the water needed for the preparations for the Passover. The servant of the Church, the servant of your family, the servant of your circle, the servant of the poor, the servant of your country. 'I am among you as One that serveth'; and so, following our Lord to Jerusalem first of all means that.

A great many people fail to start with our Lord for Jerusalem, because they fancy it involves a spirit that they have not got. But that is not so. Fellowship with the Sacred Passion demands at the outset nothing more than the spirit of duty. When the call to the young men came in the earlier days of the Great War, the Empire would have been in a plight if they had waited before they responded until they recognised themselves to be inflated with a noble spirit. They did not say: 'I will wait until I feel supremely patriotic and self-sacrificing, then I will join.' They merely said, 'Well, I

suppose it is my duty to go,' and they went. Our Lord accepts every recruit who comes to Him in the spirit of duty. He asks no more at first. Illumination, inspiration, love, the spirit of self-immolation—these are to be gained in the ranks of our Lord's followers; they are not gained as preliminaries to joining those ranks. At first our Lord invites a man simply to obey the precepts of the Church and his conscience in domestic, social and national affairs.

There are people who hesitate to obey the Easter precept of Confession and Communion because they do not feel sufficiently sorry for their sins. That is a snare of the Devil. Do you wish to follow Christ? Do you wish to make spiritual progress? Will you try in the future to do what our Lord tells you? Very well, then, pray for sorrow for sin and come to Confession and Communion. It is clear you have sufficient contrition, and you will never get any more contrition until you have received more grace.

You are quite ready to act on the motive of duty in secular life; do not be afraid to act on it in religious life. Of course, there are far higher levels, and it would be absurd to describe St. Peter or St. John, St. Francis or St. Vincent de Paul, as dutiful men. That would be like saying that Dante was dutiful to Beatrice, or Elizabeth to Robert Browning. But the way to those higher levels is by the prosaic gate of duty.

So do not wait to be prayerful before you begin to pray; pray from a sense of duty, and prayerfulness will presently come. Do not wait for the spirit of charity; act charitably from a sense of duty, and the spirit of charity will come.

I think it is clear, then, what is essential to our union with the Sacred Passion. It is acting in its spirit of utter selflessness in the little matters of everyday life; not forgetting that the first of all our obligations, those which take precedence of all others, are our Catholic Christian obligations. They

must first be fulfilled in the spirit of complete self-sacrifice, and with them all the other duties which lie along our path.

Baruch illustrates for us in a startling manner the importance of a single little duty. Our Lord seems to have made this plan in order that Judas might not discover where He was going to celebrate the Passover. Had Judas known the place beforehand, the betrayal no doubt would have taken place in the Upper Chamber. Baruch retained his free will throughout the episode. He might have stopped to gossip and have missed the tryst, but he was faithful, and we must never forget that it is to the sense of duty of the servant with the pitcher that we owe the quietude in the Upper Room which enabled our Lord to institute the Holy Eucharist and to speak the priceless discourses recorded by St. John.

In the next chapter we shall think of union with the Sacred Passion on more exalted lines: in this we remember that

we must begin to follow by taking the lowest place. Baruch stands for the fulfilment of Catholic obligations and the duties of a Christian man. And I can sum up the reflections of this meditation in a single sentence: where Catholic obligations are performed, and the duties of a Christian man are fulfilled, Jesus will never be betrayed.

Chapter III

THE GOODMAN OF THE HOUSE

And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest chamber where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.—St. Mark xiv. 14, 15.

THE reader may have wondered why I have described the south-western hill of Jerusalem as Mount Zion; for in old Jewish days the whole city was Zion, and Mount Zion was especially the Temple hill, the eastern hill. But gradually Zion died out as a local term, and it was only used as a religious expression, mostly of the Temple. It was the Christian Church which revived the name Zion as a local term, but for Christians the interest lay no longer in the Temple, but in a point on the south-western hill, a Church called Zion, and from this point the name got extended to the whole

hill and the Christian tradition has prevailed. That is why the south-western hill has been called Mount Zion since the fourth century. It was so called in the time of Constantine, and, looking further back, Epiphanius tells us that when Hadrian, in the middle of the second century, came to Jerusalem, he found the city and the Temple as destroyed by Titus, ' with the exception,' he adds, ' of a few buildings and of the little Church of God on the site where the Apostles, returning from the Ascension of the Saviour, had gone up to the Upper Room, for there it had been built.' This was the Upper Room, apparently in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, the one central meeting-place of the Church of Jerusalem throughout the Apostolic age. The one little Church of the second century was the direct descendant of the house, and the memory was never lost.

So, in the fourth century, St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, calls the little Church

'the Upper Room of the Apostles,' and there he thought it appropriate to deliver his catechetical lecture on the Holy Ghost. Etheria, the pilgrim of the fourth century, whose journal has been preserved, identifies the Church with the scene of the descent of the Paraclete, and the Liturgy of St. James describes the descent of the Holy Ghost as taking place in the Upper Room of the Holy and Glorious Zion, Mother of all the Churches.

The present building is a Franciscan thirteenth-century Church, and it is in Moslem hands. Mohammedans pronounce the chain of succession unbroken, which shows that this Church stands on the site of the Upper Room. Happily, it preserves the level of an upper chamber, and I shall never forget looking out of the window of this upper chamber and seeing from it my own tent far away upon the Mount of Olives. It seemed a parable. I had come unto Mount Zion, and I was looking at my

shifting tent life in the world from the point of view of my abiding-place in the household of God.

In the Passion Play, which has lasted in one form or another for nineteen hundred years, the goodman of this house is St. Mark, but it is more likely that he was the father of St. Mark, and probably also the owner of Gethsemane. If so, he must have died soon after, and Mary, his widow, became a hostess and benefactress of the infant Church.

'The Master saith, My time is at hand; with thee I hold the Passover with My disciples. Where is My hostelry, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples?'

It was the response which the goodman made to this request which has caused me to single him out as our third symbolic figure. In the Eastern house of those days, the room of state, the *aliyah*, was on the upper floor. It had a special outside staircase of its own from the street, as well as the entrance from the house itself. This

was, of course, the room in which it was usual to celebrate the Passover, and there the goodman was arranging the Paschal supper. He probably had many guests, and there would be several tables spread in the *aliyah* when the time came. Our Lord did not ask for the *aliyah*; all He asked for was a *katalyma*. That meant usually, in a well-to-do house, an unimportant room on the ground floor—the sort of room in an English country house where the outdoor games and the garden chairs are kept. All our Lord asked was that it might be His for the evening; that there might be no other party in the room. 'Where is My *katalyma*?'

But the goodman's answer we know. He placed the *aliyah* and everything he had at our Lord's disposal. If the supper took place on the actual Paschal night, then the host, his family and the other guests made shift as best they could. There was only the one little party of thirteen in the great room

—our Lord and the twelve Apostles. It was the goodman and his children who ate their supper that night in the room where we keep the bowls and the garden chairs.

Now we are beginning to see what the figure of the goodman adds to the figure of Baruch his servant in these little meditations upon union with our Lord in the Sacred Passion.

You will go all the way with our Lord in His Passion if you fulfil all your Catholic obligations and strive to do all the duties of a Christian man. Yes, but if you start humbly on this path you will go on gloriously too. You will find yourself persevering, not in the spirit of servitude, but in the spirit of sonship; not in the spirit of weighing out your service in a delicate pair of scales, and giving just so much and no more, but in the spirit which feels that you cannot do too much or give too much to your Master.

Once get our Lord in this way right into the *aliyah*—that is, right into the middle of

your life; once get Him there, surrounded by His saints; once carry out the impulse to give all the best you are and have to Him, all the strength of your spirit, your mind and your body; once get into such a relation with Him that for yourself, your own peculiar idiosyncrasies and tastes and preference and pleasure, you just keep a humble *katalyma* in a corner—once get them all into the corner where the garden chairs and the lawn tennis balls are, then at once in your inner life all the glories of God in man begin to show themselves. The brethren are loved, their feet are washed, the Body of the Lord and His most Precious Blood are received, the Holy Spirit descends and the phenomena of Pentecost appear.

How am I to follow Christ? Begin by confessing and resisting sins, acting on principles and keeping rules—but do not think that the Christian life is described in these dreary terms. It can no more be described in these terms than an ideal marriage can.

An ideal marriage means constant self-discipline and self-sacrifice, but they are lost sight of in the glory of the sacramental union of two faithful hearts, and in the life rich in love, usefulness and interest which follows. Does not that describe the life of St. Francis and St. Philip, St. Catherine and St. Theresa ?

It is when we pass up with this enthusiastic offering of ourselves, our souls and our bodies, to our Lord and His cause that His yoke becomes easy and His burden light. Our Lord must be our Taskmaster at the beginning of the Christian life, but He ceases to be that as soon as He becomes our welcome guest.

In the goodman of the house, then, I see mankind gradually coming back into its own in Christ. Man is now the host of God. He entertains God. He becomes great, noble, spacious, beneficent.

And this is the career our Lord offers us all.

It is not a negative life that He offers—a life of striving against sin. When He invites

us into His Church, He does not invite us to spend our lives in a sanatorium; on the contrary, He proposes to enter into us Himself and transform us into priests and kings.

How our Lord takes a man's natural powers and transforms him into a goodman, a master, we have seen. The goodmen among the painters, the musicians, the architects, the poets—our Lord made them what they were. It was not his own imagination, it was the vision of the Incarnation, which enabled Raphael to paint the Madonna di San Sisto. It was the inspiration of the Holy Ghost which built Rheims Cathedral. It is the divine philosophy of the Catholic Christian tradition which fills Shakespeare's plays. If there had never been a Good Friday, there would never have been a Beethoven. These are the best gifts, and yet the Saints show us a more excellent way.

We English read the lives of the Saints so little that we do not realise the capacities of

human nature. In the past their lives have often been written in an uncritical, unintelligent way, and in a tone of eulogy which has sickened virile minds. They are better done to-day. Father Cuthbert's *Life of St. Francis* (and I should add Jorgensen's *Life of St. Francis*, which Father Russell thought the most attractive of all), and also Francis Thompson's *Life of St. Ignatius Loyola*, are cases in point.

The goodman represents them all, for he stands as a symbol of mankind, opening the guest-chamber of its heart once more, throwing open the door which had been barred so long that the tendrils of ivy had bound it to the wall, but which was opened when He Who is the Light of the World knocked, in the awful moonlight of that Maundy Thursday night. It was opened that we might become partakers of His divinity Who for our sakes became partaker of our humanity—Jesus Christ our Lord.

Chapter IV

THE SPECTATOR IN GETHSEMANE

And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body ; and the young men laid hold on him :

And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.—St. Mark xiv. 51 and 52.

ON Maundy Thursday night, some years ago, I went down with a little group of friends from the top of the Mount of Olives to spend some hours in the Garden of Gethsemane. The path is exceedingly steep and stony ; it was slippery and difficult in the uncertain moonlight. Before us, on the other side of the Kedron valley, the lights of the city glittered, except where the empty space on which the Temple once stood lay dim and desolate under the moon.

As we went down the hill the walls of the old Temple area rose higher and higher in front of us, until they shut out Jerusalem, and

we were in the dark, narrow valley, curiously warm after the cold breezes on the hill-top. At the tiny door in the high white wall of the garden we found the kindly Franciscan who had come out of his convent to give us this privilege, and we went in under the old olive-trees.

These old olive-trees, if not themselves as old as our Lord's time, may well have sprung as young shoots from the trees He knelt under. The Paschal moon shone through the olive branches as we knelt at our prayers, and threw a confused black and white pattern on the ground. The dogs of the city kept up their distant barking ; noises from the streets were carried on the night wind ; now and again a trumpet sounded from the citadel, awakening memories of the awful night long ago.

Then there stood on this spot a group of figures, still and waiting under the olives. The pose of the central figure was serene and victorious, and yet the quiet, steady face

glistened with sweat as after a great exertion, and on the face and on the hands there was blood. The surrounding figures expressed an agony of terrified expectation; and they had reason. A body of soldiers was marching down from Antonia; already torches gleamed and spears flashed round the garden fences. The men in the garden were caught in a trap.

And now, in and out among the olives, with swift, unequal steps, there came the figure of a man—the most terrible figure in human history. With a quavering 'Hail, Rabbi!' he did not merely kiss Jesus, but, overdoing his part, he covered Him with kisses.

'Judas, with a kiss do you deliver up the Son of Man?' Our Lord walked down the garden to the entry and faced the soldiers. 'Whom seek ye?' He asked.

'Jesus the Nazarene.'

Our Lord's figure assumed an appearance of great majesty, and He replied, 'I am He.'

They were so much amazed at being confronted with this kingly Figure, where they had expected a frightened peasant, that they recoiled in a momentary panic; those in the rear were thrown down by the back swerve of the front rank on the steep, broken ground.

Jesus waited motionless until order was restored. Then He asked a second time: 'Whom seek ye?' and they made the same answer. 'I told you,' He replied, 'that I am He; and since it is I you seek, you will not harm these others.'

As He spoke, the captain made a signal and they seized Jesus and handcuffed Him. Simon Peter could not bear this. He drew his dagger, and shouting wildly, 'Master, shall we use our swords?' he struck Malchus, the Jewish leader, and the blow severed his ear.

In clear tones of command our Lord spoke: 'Put up thy sword; they that take the sword shall perish by the sword'; then,

turning to His guards, He said, 'Give Me this grace,' and, withdrawing one of His hands as they tied Him, He stanched the blood of the wound.

And, now they were ready, the soldiers fell in again, the word was given, and once more the tramp of the soldiers sounded on the road. As they left the garden they noticed a young man with an excited, bewildered face, who was an odd figure. He had been aroused from sleep, apparently in a villa adjoining, by the noise. He had put on a dressing-gown over his sleeping-clothes—that is the modern equivalent to what the Greek words really mean—and had rushed out into the night air. He thought he was quite safe from molestation, but the officials laid hands on him. In terror he tore himself from their grasp, and, leaving his linen robe in their hands, fled in his sleeping-clothes through the steep olive grove along the hillside.

Up the stony pathway from the Kedron

Jesus was led into the city. The narrow streets echoed with the tramp of feet; anxious mothers and frightened children roused from sleep peeped out of their windows and trembled as the dreaded soldiers tramped by. What has happened? Is there a riot? Whom have they caught? But now and again one of those daughters of Jerusalem who played so brave a part next day caught a glimpse, amid the glare and smoke of the torches, of the bound and guarded Figure, the calm and steady face of Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile, the young spectator in Gethsemane had got back to his bedroom chilled and trembling, and was reflecting, with shame and self-contempt, on his extraordinary adventure. Tradition tells us that the young man died the death of a Christian martyr in the end—that he was the evangelist St. Mark. Whether that be so or not, let us now compare our own attitude to our Lord in His Sacred Passion with that of the young spectator in Gethsemane.

ASSISTANTS AT THE PASSION

First let us get it quite clear in our minds that every Passiontide everyone who knows about Jesus Christ takes up the attitude of one or other of the original spectators of the Passion, and that he takes up his attitude much more intelligently and deliberately, and, therefore, with a far greater personal responsibility before God, because he has reason to believe that the life and character of Christ are the life and character of God, and that, therefore, the relation of his human free will to Christ is the relation of his human free will to the ultimate force in the universe. In a word, that the attitude in which a man stands to Jesus Christ is the attitude in which he stands towards his eternal destiny.

Every Passiontide, then, as it comes round, divides mankind into three groups—the friends of Christ, the enemies of Christ, and those who have never heard of Him. That is the first point.

The second is this : you and I, and all the

people we know, belong either to the first group or to the second. We are either the friends of Christ or His enemies. And yet, how many people strive to be neither! Half the young people around us spend their lives in trying to wriggle out of this dilemma. They invent every sort of pretext for standing aloof from our Lord's religion. They ridicule simple Evangelical people who read their Bibles and go to prayer-meetings, and call them 'goody-goody,' or pious, or hypocrites. They slander devout Catholic people who go to confession and to the Eucharist, nickname them Papists, and readily listen to evil tales about historical Christianity. Every Judas, every Ananias, every Demas in history, is produced as a reason why these superior young people should have nothing to do with the Master Whom Judas and Ananias and Demas betrayed. They have nothing whatever to say against Jesus Christ, they tell us, but they will not have anything to do with

Him, because there has always been confusion, disorder and treachery round His sacred Figure. That is their particular form of betrayal. And it is enough.

But, although there are only two groups at the Passion, the friends and the foes, there is a third state of mind. There is the good-hearted fellow who has never quite understood the matter. He also is in one group or the other. He is either a friend or he is a foe, but honestly he does not know which. He has made no conscious personal decisions in the matter. I imagine him here. I imagine him beginning to feel uncomfortable. And well he may, for he is the young man in the linen garment, who was caught in the garden of Gethsemane.

The young man in the linen garment must have often heard our Lord preach. His relations were probably friends of our Lord. He was probably the son of the owner of Gethsemane. Apparently good

feelings were at work in his heart; he saw the truth of the things our Lord said. But he was not a true follower of our Lord. He felt a bit perplexed and worried about the whole thing; but he went to bed, as usual, on Maundy Thursday night, and he had been roused from sleep by the torches and the sounds of wild excitement. He had dashed out into the thick of it in the clothes in which he was sleeping, with just a wrapper twisted round him, and lo! of a sudden he was caught, and held in the glare of the torches, by the enemies of the Lord, who said, in effect, 'You cannot be here, and be indifferent; you must be on one side or the other.'

Now look at our friend of to-day, his parallel. He is a bit uncomfortable about Jesus Christ. He has heard the Gospel message, but still he is not on one side or the other. He comes to Church occasionally, but his life is not the life of a disciple of Christ. He is here to-night because

somebody asked him to come, and lo! it is Gethsemane; he is caught and held.

He is caught and held, but not by our Lord. Christ and His followers compel no man. Christ is standing bound with ropes, and His friends are only saying, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by?'

No! it is not the friends of Christ who seize and hold the undecided man. It is His enemies. It is the world, the flesh and the Devil. 'Are we really,' they say, 'to count you for the future a disciple of that Being; you who have so far been on such friendly terms with us? At least think what it means. Be sure we shall treat you as we are treating Him. See, He has lost His friends; even His disciples have rushed away in a panic. They will come back, but you will lose your friends, and they will never come back. Those friends with whom you drink and joke could not stand a consistent Christian in their company. Look how they are laughing at Christ; they will

all laugh at you in the same way. Look how He is tied and bound. But what are those ropes to the rules which will keep you tied and bound for the rest of your life? No deep drinking, no swearing, no impurity, no immodesty, no indecent joking, no little tricks of the trade.'

Such are the whispers of the world, the flesh and the Devil to the undecided man in the Garden of Gethsemane; and, just as that poor youth of long ago saw that either he must go all the way with Jesus Christ, or fly naked to hide himself among the trees of the garden, so the uncertain man who is with us to-day is brought, perhaps for the last time, to see that for him also there are two, not three, ways open. He must either go all the way with Jesus Christ, or, in the nakedness of his fallen nature, try to hide like fallen Adam from the eye of God.

Going all the way with Jesus Christ—what does that mean? What will that

involve? It means becoming more and more like Jesus Christ, and it will involve just whatever is required to make you that.

In the first place, it involves taking the next step in the right direction. And let every one of us here ask himself: What is the next step in the right direction in my case?

We are at all sorts of stages in the long journey from the power of Satan unto God. There are some here who will never move a hair's breadth towards God until they have severed wrong relationships they have formed with other people. There are others who must first of all bring their wills to bear upon a guilty habit and co-operate with God in its destruction. At least half of us must at once get the control of our tongues, and cease for ever to speak unclean words or bitter words. And every one of us must improve his relation to God in His Church. There are some who must begin to speak to God for the first time in real prayer;

some who must make their first confessions ; some who must return to Confession and Communion ; some who will get no further until they have made real, true efforts after some form of meditation. To some the invitation to the retreat, which they have so far not quite come to the point of accepting, has pointed the way to a closer walk with God.

Whatever the next step ought to be in your case and mine this Passiontide, we must take it, and in taking it we must never forget its true character. It is purely a personal matter between ourselves and the bound and guarded Figure with the blood upon His face and on His hands. It is altogether a matter between you, between me, and Jesus Christ. It is an act of loyalty to Him.

Chapter V

MALCHUS, THE MAN WHOM CHRISTENDOM WOUNDS

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it, and smote the High Priest's servant and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.—St. John xviii. 10.

THE scene was an enclosed garden, probably attached to a small oil-press and situated on the wooded slope at the base of the Mount of Olives. The full moon shone down into the deep valley, but the trees cast confusing shadows on the uneven ground. The place was lit by the yellow glare of torches and filled with smoke and tumult. It was surrounded by an armed band. Jesus and His followers had been caught in a trap. But it was only Jesus that the soldiers wanted, and they seized Him and handcuffed Him. Peter sprang to the rescue. From under his cloak

he whipped out a short Galilean sword, and, shouting wildly, 'Master, shall we use our swords?' aimed a blow at a prominent figure, whom the painters represent as having carried a lantern. The man swerved, and Peter's sword shaved off his right ear, or part of it, and perhaps hurtled his lantern out of his hand, as the pictures always suggest.

The Fourth Gospel tells us that the servant's name was Malchus. The name suggests that he was not a Jew, that he was of Syrian or Phœnician origin, and from the phrase used we gather that he was the confidential attendant of the High Priest. We know the characteristics of such a person. He would be able, discreet, reserved, up to a certain limit faithful in the discharge of his duties; no doubt he was sent with the party because he could be trusted with a delicate matter, and trusted to give an intelligent report of it. A Christian, championing his Master in a useless and mistaken way, mutilated Malchus, and Christ

healed him. Christ did not restore his ear; He applied a force which hurried through and completed the process of healing; the man returned to Jerusalem mutilated for life, though perhaps under the long hair of the period the mutilation was not very visible. It remained an extraordinary life-long rebuke to him for his share in the night's proceedings, and yet he had not been much to blame personally. His presence in the garden was the result of a long train of antecedent circumstances. In such matters men are not altogether their own masters. He was there in the ordinary discharge of duties which, generally speaking, were honourable duties. It takes more than human knowledge to assign him his share in the responsibility for what he did. In doing it Christendom injured him and Christ healed him. The whole incident gave him his chance. Whether he took it we do not know, but, since the Fourth Gospel at the end of the century thinks

worth while to record his name, it is possible he became a Christian.

I take Malchus as a type, a type of numbers of people on the fringe of Christianity, who are not helped but injured by the sort of contact they have with it. You naturally think first of that tragedy of colonisation, the corruption of pagans and of the child races by unworthy Christians. Multitudes of heathen who have been exploited, outraged and murdered by nominal Christians must regard all Christians as devils. And where, as in the case of the higher Eastern races, the white and the brown or yellow meet on more equal terms, the white man's civilisation and the white man's morals have often had a bad effect upon the races which have been brought into contact with them.

But this is not my point. Of course, outsiders are wounded by coming into contact with nominal Christians. It is unnecessary to insist upon that. But Malchus

was not wounded by a nominal Christian. He was wounded by coming into contact with a wrong conception of Christian fidelity, with a Christian who preached, like Mohammed, with a sword. Christianity must always injure when it arrives as the religion of the Conqueror, that is, as the religion of the Sword and not of the Cross. Hundreds of years ago the Spanish disciples of Peter took the sword and went to South America; they blotted out a noble civilisation and a noble race, and laid the foundation of a curiously corrupt Christian society. The methods of the British Empire are more humane; nevertheless, a Christianity which arrives as the religion of the British conqueror is not the religion of Christ, and it is the glory of the missions of our religious orders in India that they keep themselves clear of all British Imperialism, and meet India sitting humbly in the dust, and there displaying our Lord.

But we are still in the region of the

obvious, and I pass on to a wider and still sadder application of the contention, that Christendom hurts the neutral and hostile people who live perforce on its margin. The moral condition of London shocks and disgusts a cultivated Parsee, Buddhist or Hindu ; he would say that there was a more ugly and joyless moral disorder here than there is in Benares or Kandy ; and he would be right, and the reason of it is this—the disorder and misery which St. Paul speaks of as arising out of the failure of the Jewish people to keep the Mosaic law, to the whole of which they were committed, are far worse in a situation which St. Paul never saw, a situation in which the Mosaic law is exchanged for the Christian law, and portions of it are pressed by inherited tradition upon all sorts and conditions of people who refuse to be helped by Christ to keep it. These people wish to be careless, merry pagans, but they live under the thraldom of conventions imposed by an inherited Christianity, and

it makes their lives joyless ; they feel themselves injured, and these injured people naturally wish to bind or kill Peter ; they say that they are put into a relation with Peter which is not of their seeking, and that Peter is hurting them. You and I cannot consent to their binding and killing Peter, we must go on inviting them to be healed by Christ.

Take two obvious illustrations. There is the English Sunday—not altogether a Christian institution as the British keep it, largely a Puritan institution, that is, a Jewish institution, because Puritanism was a lapse into Judaism, with the Nazarene as its Messiah. The English Sunday is a very dull and joyless day, and so arises a clamour, a very natural clamour : ' The religious people have tyrannised over us too long in this matter. Peter is mutilating our lives ; let us overturn him, let us fling open the theatres and keep this bank holiday like all other bank holidays.' Now the

answer to that is, you cannot cure the joylessness of the English by opening theatres : they are quite as joyless on Easter Monday as they are on Easter Day. The Church has no objection to Sunday recreation as long as the commandment of creation that every man shall have one day's rest in seven is kept. Sunday is not a fast ; it is a feast. If you may dance on Christmas night you may dance on Sunday night ; if you may go to a theatre on the Feast of the Epiphany you may go to a theatre on the Sunday in the octave of the Epiphany. But Christ alone can cure the joylessness of the English Sunday. Happy pagans cannot exist among the baptised. Touch Christ in contempt and you will go on suffering until He heals you. That is the meaning of the story of the Wandering Jew.

The second illustration is a graver one—the Christian law of marriage. In many cases it is working very badly in this semi-pagan country. Disorders, cruelties, perjuries

of all sorts arise in connection with it, and so the cry rises on all sides, 'Peter is mutilating our lives; let us overthrow Peter.' To that we cannot consent. If man, self-conscious and free, possessed of memory and conscience, makes marriage a terminable connection, he sinks lower than the beasts. A Christian civilisation must remain Christian or perish. If you give up Christian principles and Christian institutions you sap the foundations upon which Europe rests, and the result may be that your grandchildren will become hewers of wood and drawers of water to the Japanese. We must not be content with standing ourselves on our Catholic Christian basis in these matters. We must go on striving to save our country from indifference and hostility to Christ. We must continue to preach Christ's power as the only remedy for the wounds which Christ's law may inflict on those who are proving that they cannot live under it in the strength of natural virtue.

You will hear it widely asserted that the fact that Christendom wounds those who stand on its margin is the fault of Christians failing to reflect Christ, and of course that is very, very often true. It was true in this incident in the garden; when Peter struck at Malchus he acted himself like an outsider, and whenever we act and speak like outsiders ourselves we give to outsiders an excuse for saying that there is no reality in our pretentious Creed, and that Christendom lays burdens upon humanity which its adherents evade. But you do not by any means always succeed in commending Christianity to the frank outsider by illustrating it well. From some angles it looks like any other human movement; its adherents profess a creed which the best of them by no means completely illustrates; and its critics give it no licence whatever. Every scandal is held to prove it false, every failure to prove it impracticable; its adherents are shy, nervous,

awkward, irritable, given to hitting out aimlessly and uselessly against their opponents.

All this is inevitable. You can diminish it, you can strive to make Christianity look fair to the outsider and give him practical proofs; but if the man persists in always looking at the human movement with an eye to criticism, and never at the Divine Lord, he will always see in it the faulty things he intends to see, things which can be put forward as justification for having nothing more to do with it.

But do not imagine that we should disarm opposition to Christianity and draw in the people on the margin if we were all Christs. It was Christ, not His weak disciples, that Malchus was out against in the garden that night, and the men on the margin are unconverted, and, of the unconverted, Christ said, 'He that is not with Me is against Me.' No doubt there is a lot of honest mistaking of good for bad in the criticism of

Christianity, but the attack on the bad is often only a disguised attack on the good, and the opposition which surrounds Christianity to-day is at its heart a strong dislike for Christ and His message. In such people joy dies.

Why can so few people play Shakespeare's comedies to-day? Because men and women do not believe enough in the spiritual basis of life and the greatness of man to be able to play Shakespeare; in other words, because they can no longer even simulate joy. Meanwhile there always stands, far away from them in the centre of a vast circle, this bugbear, this spoil-sport, this ghost at the banquet, the Figure which wears the crown of thorns and bears the five wounds. If joyous paganism could sport around this Figure, He and His would never have been persecuted; but it cannot. Wherever the vision of the Crucified appears Pan droops and dies; and I have little doubt that in the future the descendants of the men who

stand on the margin to-day will revive the penal laws and make a grand attempt, in the interest of humanity, to drive Christ out of the world. Once more Peter and Paul will be bound and slain, but it will be quite useless, for they are only instruments of the Power behind, and through the blood of the martyrs in three days that Power will rise again.

I sum up in a sentence. Contact with Christ either blesses or curses. You touch Him either as His friend or His foe, and to be the foe of the Highest Good is to be accursed. You cannot take Him in small quantities of your own prescription. You cannot treat Him as an object of interest amid the furniture of your life. You cannot come with impunity and play about His Altar to give yourself thrilling sensations. My own church, which has been a blessing to many, has been a curse to many others. Good would it have been for them if they had never seen its spire rising over

the houses of the street. For, as Christ saves, He divides, He judges, He condemns. 'I indeed baptise you with water,' says the Baptist. 'He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor and will gather the wheat into His garner.' The Baptist is speaking of the inevitable result of coming face to face with Christ, either accepting Him or refusing to accept Him. He does not speak of God's merciful dealing with those who have never known Him. But he speaks of Malchus. Did Christ begin to heal some wound in Malchus deeper than the external injury which He touched? Is he gathered now as wheat into the garner? We cannot tell. And He speaks of us, and He concludes in words which we do not place among our favourite texts, 'But the chaff He will burn up with fire unquenchable.'

Chapter VI

THE PORTRESS, THE WOMAN WHO WOUNDS CHRIST

And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. Now that disciple was known unto the High Priest, and entered in with Jesus into the court of the High Priest, but Peter was standing at the door without. So the other disciple which was known unto the High Priest went out and spake unto her that kept the door and brought in Peter. The maid therefore that kept the door saith unto Peter, Art thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not.—St. John xviii. 15–17.

T is an uphill walk of some length from Gethsemane to the top of Mount Zion, the high southern hill on which the palace of the High Priest stood. The palace was apparently built in the form of two quadrangles, one beyond the other. The doorway between the two was usually guarded by a porter, for it is inconceivable that there could have been a permanent portress in the High Priest's palace. The man must have gone with the search-party to Gethsemane and left this

girl in charge, probably his daughter. The inner courtyard was full of people, who had lit a fire in the middle of it, round which they were talking in excited tones.

Soon after the soldiers had delivered our Lord up, and He had been taken into the palace, two men entered the precincts. The first, young, strong, and resolute—for we assume it was St. John—was known to the portress as an acquaintance of the High Priest; but the second, an older man, who looked very nervous and greatly agitated, she appears to have stopped with the announcement that strangers were not being admitted.

The first man had gone in without looking round, but, finding that his companion had not followed him, he went back, spoke a word to the portress, and beckoned Peter in. The portress looked at Peter curiously; he was a picture of misery: she had no orders to detect and denounce our Lord's disciples: that was the last thing the

authorities wished; they wished as little fuss made about the suppression of our Lord as possible. So it was an idle, gossiping question that the young woman asked as she let him through, the question of a mere heartless curiosity: 'Are you also one of this Man's disciples?'

And poor Peter said, 'No, I am not.'

At first thought one would say that St. Peter's denials were the sharpest pang our Lord felt in His Passion, and that they were the grievous wound which this young woman inflicted on Christ. But I do not think it was so. I do not think our Lord was cut to the heart by the denials of St. Peter, because He saw that never for a moment did St. Peter really apostatise. By nature a buoyant optimist whose personal love for his Master had carried him lightly over the rough places of discipleship, Peter had never thought it could really come to this; he had not really thought it possible that one of them could betray their Master and that

their Master would submit to handcuffs. He was completely unbalanced, his mind was distraught. It is quite possible that he excused the first denial by saying to himself that they must all represent our Lord as having no dangerous following at all, and that by denying Him they would diminish His importance, and so perhaps save Him ; the human mind readily invents excuses of this sort.

Our Lord yearned lovingly over the misery and disorder of the devoted friend who was to be His chief of staff, but He knew that Peter was buying essential experience. It was the portress, not St. Peter, who was grieving the Sacred Heart, and the portress was not a bad young woman. As far as we know, she was only the ordinary unconverted girl, the girl on the margin of Christianity ; and her question to St. Peter was the ordinary gossiping, careless question which is asked a thousand times every day in London.

Any man who is trying to do the work of a Christian priest has from time to time to deal with St. Peter after his denials. Many instances occur to me. For example, I remember a very fine young man, a splendid young Christian gentleman, belonging to an English family with a great Christian tradition. I remember him running off the lines a bit, not badly but thoughtlessly, heedlessly, getting away from the centre on to the margin, spending too much, upsetting the family budget, and working too little. I was with him when the cock crew. It was a letter from his father which broke the spell, and showed him life again in true proportion—a noble letter, loving, discerning and strong. The boy flung himself into a great chair and wept bitterly, and he has never swerved from the path of duty from that day to this. That was a deeply affecting moment, but it was not a painful one. A loving heart was being recalled by love to the path of duty. And that was all that

happened when our Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

No, it was for the portress that the Sacred Heart was aching. I have called this chapter 'The woman who wounds Christ'; and you may think I call it so because this was the woman whose careless question frightened Simon Peter into denying Him. But I do not mean that. Simon Peter's denials did not prevent his becoming the primate of the Apostles, who was crucified with his head downward. I meant that the careless young portress stands for the most difficult form of hostility our Lord has to overcome—the hostility of frivolity. I want you to reflect that the most dangerous enemies the Gospel of Christ has to contend with are not the many who deny it nor the few who betray it, but the multitude who trifle with it.

'The hostility of frivolity,' that is our subject, and let us be clear, first of all, what we mean by frivolity. The middle class

makes the absurd mistake of thinking that vitality is frivolity. It thinks that the society of the governing classes, the society described in the reminiscences of prominent persons, is frivolous. That is absurd; it is desperately hard-working; it makes colossal efforts to attain its aims, and it is possessed of an astonishing vitality. It does with very little sleep; after days of the most exhausting activity it stands up delightedly to dance or sits down delightedly to bridge. When the *Memoir* of the Grenfell twins tells us how two of our greatest Parliamentarians had a race on trays along the corridor of a country house, and how one slipped off his tray and won without it, and how the judge said, 'The Free Trader has won,' and the victor rejoined, 'Yes, but he has lost his seat in doing it,' it is not describing frivolity, it is describing vitality; and we may confidently leave our country in the hands of men who can still romp like boys

in their moments of leisure. By frivolity we do not mean vitality.

Again, by frivolous people we do not mean people whose aims are mostly concentrated on some end which is not spiritual; they are the least frivolous people imaginable. Our financiers are not frivolous people; no galley-slave was ever more firmly chained to his oar than they. Again, the successful painter, singer, actor, dancer, are models of concentrated industry. You go to a music-hall, and presently a group of young people appear and do an acrobatic turn which seems to set all the ordinary laws of gravitation at defiance, but which is really the result of the most exquisite study of the laws of gravitation. Are those lightly clad, thin-faced, smiling young people frivolous? Indeed they are not; you would be cut to the heart and weep if you knew what they had gone through in order to present you with five minutes' light-hearted wonderment. What is frivolity? It is trifling

with the things one holds to be the most important, whatever they are—dancing or prayers, stocks and shares or the Sacraments, a place in Parliament or a place among the Saints. In a word, frivolity is *not really trying*. And the multitude of our Lord's enemies are the people who do not try. He suffers less from the people who pursue wrong aims than from the people who pursue no aims.

And so, together with those people on the margin whom Christendom wounds, the pagans who find themselves, willy-nilly, always in touch with it, and are depressed in consequence, and would like to sweep it off the map, there is a large admixture of people who cruelly wound Christ, people who know Who He is, who do not deny His claims, but who trifle with Him, who really stand as far off as the pagans from the Figure who wears the crown of thorns and bears the five wounds, and who will not take the same sort of trouble about their

discipleship as our young acrobats take about their performance on the trapeze at the Coliseum. You would not expect these people to have very nice feelings, and they have not. The pagan whom Christendom wounds often has a kindlier outlook than the man or woman whose frivolous relation to Him wounds Christ, and this lack of good feeling in nominal Christians, who do not try, expresses itself, day after day, all round us in London, in just exactly such unkindnesses of speech as that unkindness of the portress which made St. Peter fall. The amount of unkindness of relationship and of speech which is exhibited by people who certainly profess, even practise, Christianity is a perpetual marvel to me, and let us be sure it hurts Christ more than any number of frightened denials from distracted but loving and broken-hearted Peters.

Is not it true that the bulk of Christ's enemies are the frivolous? Is not it true that, if the majority of people tried to carry

out what they believed with a perseverance proportionate to its importance, instantly the whole position of Christendom would be revolutionised, and Christ would begin to come into His own?

But the frivolous witness against the Christ, not only by not doing what they ought to do; they witness against Him by being what they are. It is no argument against Christ that He has bitter, unrelenting, plotting enemies. All strong personalities have. But it does seem to be an argument against Him that He has such a lot of rotten adherents. Someone who came to me the other day with difficulties about the Faith advanced this as a main difficulty: 'Surely it is all so tremendous that if it were true, and people really believed it true, they must take it more seriously; they could not stand towards it as the majority do.' And so the Christians who do not try, the Christians on the margin of Christianity, are the main hindrance to

the crowd they mix with—the pagans on the margin of Christianity. 'We honestly do not see,' say the pagans, 'that these people who call themselves Christians, but who practically stand where we do, are any better than ourselves.' Show a pagan one of the Christians of the centre, one of the real inner circle, and he recognises him at once. 'Oh, yes, a saint,' he says; as one might say, 'Oh, that's a flamingo'; and the real reason why the saint does not impress him more is that the saint is such a rare bird in England that the pagan feels justified in regarding him as an unnatural freak, like a white blackbird. But if the number of white blackbirds multiplied a thousandfold, the pagan would begin to feel that there was a force at work of which he must take account.

What is the source of this inertia which besets us all, and, whenever we fall captive to it, transfers us from the centre to the margin? The source of it is sin. The remedy is repentance, contrition, confession, amendment.

'I have given up everything, Father. I never say my prayers, I never go to Communion, I am cross and ill-tempered, I hate everything, I really think I must be mad.' 'Oh, no, you are not; you are not mad, you are *bad*, *bad*, *bad*, that is what is the matter with you; and what you need is to get back to the centre, which is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and begin afresh.' 'Very well,' says one, 'if I am to return to the centre, it shall be to practise the only sort of religion worth anything—philanthropy.' 'Very well,' says the second, 'if I am to return to the centre, it shall be to practise the only sort of religion worth anything—good nature.' 'Very well,' says the third, 'if I am to return to the centre, it shall be to practise the only sort of religion worth anything—the sportsman's code.'

In the course of these studies we shall arrive at Calvary. When we do so we will examine these three proposals in its light.

Chapter VII

THE SERVANTS OF CAIAPHAS

And the servants did strike Him with the palms of their hands.—St. Mark xiv. 65.

LET us go back in thought to a day some years before that happened. It is a cottage in the hill country of Judæa, full to-day of mingled tears and pride. The eldest son, this strong-looking, vigorous fellow, is leaving home. He is in luck's way. He has got a post in Jerusalem, and in the palace of the High Priest, respectable, dignified, well paid.

And now the time of parting has come. All meals were religious acts among the Jews, but this last meal has been more religious than usual. The traveller has not been able to eat much breakfast. The father's grave face and the mother's assumed cheerfulness, and the tearful eyes of his

sisters, have given the young fellow a lump in his throat. And now has come the last blessing and the last embrace, and he is striding down the hill with his pack on his back and a great ache in his heart. But he has got his chance, and he is going to make the most of it.

He is overawed by the stately, spacious palace of the High Priest. He finds himself in a large group of capable, well-trained people, and his great desire is to be as much like the people round him as possible. At first, it is true, their point of view and their conversation disturb him extremely. They are constantly saying and doing things which his old mother up there in the hill country would object to, things she would call coarse-minded and low. But, then, as he comes to reflect, the old lady knows nothing about life; she is the dearest person in the world, but, of course, she is narrow-minded, and quite absurdly religious. Look at the Lord Caiaphas! What a good

example of a man who is both religious and sensible at the same time. The Lord Caiaphas knows quite well that, after all, a man has got his life to live. No, no, these people are not really coarse-minded and low, they are only sensible and shrewd, and their conversation is often really very funny.

They had laughed a good deal at first at his provincial accent. 'Thou art a provincial,' they had jeered when he had made one of his silly little protests against something, 'thy speech bewrayeth thee.' Well, he now saw how foolish his 'mother's boy' attitude had been. He makes no more protests, and he has taken enormous pains to get rid of his provincial accent. He has become attracted to one of the maidservants in the palace. She is the daughter of the porter who lives in the lodge, and she has lightly laughed him out of all the remains of his religious scruples.

I wonder how many young men have

cast away all that was best and noblest in them at the derisive laugh of a girl! A respectable young woman who laughs at religion is one of the finest instruments the Devil possesses. Gradually the simple young fellow of a few years back, with his simple point of view and his simple aim, loses his individuality. He can give no account of his inner state of mind, because three separate beings seem to manifest themselves in him, and to reign in him alternately. When he goes back for his holidays to the hill country, for a few strangely happy days he lives in the kingdom of the past, and something of the youth of long ago appears. In Jerusalem he is a shrewd, knowing man of the world, with a bitter and unclean tongue, and sometimes he loses all individuality whatsoever in the crowd about him. He becomes part of a force which has characteristics the sum-total of which no one of its members possesses—I mean the force of the united opinion and action of

the servants of Caiaphas. A coarse, evil-tongued man is a horrible creature, but a coarse, evil-tongued crowd is a monster, because in a crowd each individual contributes to a condition of feeling the sum of which is far in excess of what any individual in it feels. It thinks, and speaks, and acts as no individual in it, if left to himself, would think, or speak, or act, and many a falling man has never realised the trend of his thought and action until a crowd, of which he has become a yelling unit, has suddenly revealed it to him.

Many men secretly believe that, after all, they are only animals, and they secretly wish to live like animals. But that is just what no man can possibly do. No man can sink into an animal. If a man sinks, he sinks by making wrong acts of will; in other words, he sinks into a devil. And a coarse, evil-tongued crowd is not a big animal; it is a big devil.

That, then, is where our poor boy found

himself on the night of the Betrayal. He was a bit of the horrible devil whose image has been caught and engraved for ever upon the tablets of history—that horrible devil, the public opinion of the servants of Caiaphas. 'What fun, what fun it was!' he chuckles, still under the delirium of it when he meets a friend next morning during the trials in the Prætorium. 'When the Lord Caiaphas went away we just did what we liked. There was such a crowd. I thought I should never get at Him; but I got my chance all right, and you should have heard the smack I gave Him. It echoed all through the place, and everyone laughed. The worst of it was He did not seem to mind very much what we did to Him. But we made Him mind something at last, and that was funnier still. The porter's daughter, she started it. She pointed out a big man with a beard slinking about in the courtyard; he looked like one of the people in the village at home;

he could not keep still a minute; seemed to be clean off his head. So the porter's daughter began asking him if he was a friend of the Nazarene's—just in the sort of tone in which she used to make fun of me. But he hardly seemed to know what he was doing; he kept muttering that he knew nothing about it, and mooning in and out of the courtyard and round the fire. So a lot of fellows began asking him the same question. He got so excited, we thought we would have some fun with him, and a whole lot of us got round him and began chaffing him about his accent—the same way they used to chaff me—and then he became quite mad. You should have heard the things he said. And then at that moment, as luck would have it, the Nazarene was up in the gallery outside the audience chamber, and He gave him such a weird look. He seemed to be fond of the man we were chaffing, and, when he saw Him, the man burst out crying just like a big

baby, and dashed off as if he were possessed. How we did laugh ! '

Every day in the city of London that goes on. They will be at it again at luncheon-time to-morrow. In every college at Oxford and Cambridge there is a knot of men, in every big business house and office round about here there is a knot of men and women, who are the servants of Caiaphas. As individuals they differ. Some are better than others. But as a force, a public opinion, they constitute the devil of the place seeking whom it may devour.

The story I have told you has been enacted before my own eyes over and over again ; that lad is the simple boy who comes up to Oxford or Cambridge with a strong streak of the animal in him, who falls into the wrong set and who sinks, not into the animal, but into the devil. That lad is the callow boy who comes up into the big world here without the preparation of life in the microcosm of a University, who apes all

that is worst in the man of affairs or of pleasure and who sinks, not into the animal, but into the devil.

And I want you to see that it is not one whit worse to assist in torturing Jesus of Nazareth, to assist in degrading Simon Bar Jona, than it is to assist in torturing Joshua Smith or to assist in degrading Simon Jones. Our Lord will not judge those who struck Him with the palms of their hands more severely than those who have caused His little ones to offend.

The servants of Caiaphas, whom we meet every day, who vary greatly as to their personal life, but who, taken together as a force of opinion, are the devil of the place —what attitude shall we take up towards them? Let me hand on to you the advice which Dr. King, the Bishop of Lincoln, gave to me when I went up to Oxford about the servants of Caiaphas. 'Of course,' he said, 'you have got them in your college, and if they are the leading set in your college

it is a very serious matter, but remember there is a great deal of good among them. It is all there, dear fellow, it is all there, closed up like a tight bud in the early spring, only wanting some sunshine and some rain to unfold into the flower.' It was another way of putting the dear old story of Michael Angelo looking at a great block of marble; and the pupil's question: 'Master, why are you staring at that big stone?' And the master's answer was, 'I see an angel in the marble.'

Yes, that anti-religious, immoral public opinion against which you, my brother, my sister, struggle every day, is the devil of the place. But devils are fallen angels, and if you would ever redeem the servants of Caiaphas, it is to the hidden angel within them that you must appeal. There lay the whole secret of Dr. King's apostolate in Oxford. What men said to themselves was this: 'I love King with all my heart, and so I am not a hopeless fellow after all.

The thing in me that loves King is good, and I would to God I had more of it, and I will see whether I cannot get more of it.'

And so, gradually, men began to get a great distaste for the service of Caiaphas. It began to seem so poor and so foolish and so insane to be the servants of Caiaphas in the presence of this beautiful specimen of the opposite service—the service of Jesus. All the poor little worms began to realise that they *were* poor little worms; they began to long even for the restraints of the chrysalis stage, for discipline and for restriction, so that at last they might become butterflies. Yes, butterflies! for there was something dancing and radiant about the personality of the Bishop of Lincoln—a blithe, boyish freedom and gaiety. And yet everybody knew that it was not merely temperament; it was victory. It was not merely nature; it was grace. There was the Greek word Κόπος which he kept before him in his study, that portmanteau word,

as Lewis Carroll, on the other side of Tom Quad, would have called it; the word which means toil and weariness, the word which summed up his trials and his victories. And the beautiful face was joyous and bright, not because its owner knew and felt nothing of pain and sorrow and anxiety, but because he found God in them all.

So the Bishop lived, and so he died, the most infectiously holy and delightful person it is possible to imagine. I remember once helping him with his luggage on to the Zermatt train at Visp. He had had a big wedding to perform in London the day before, and had come straight out without stopping, in very hot weather. One is not at one's best under those circumstances, but I can see the Bishop now planted on his luggage on the balcony of the little Zermatt train and entirely captivating the stiff Swiss guard, who gradually relaxed altogether under the Bishop's smile, and the way in which he made the most of his German.

And I remember once sitting at tea in the chalet on the Gletscher Alp, at Saas Fée, and how, suddenly, Clara, who kept the chalet—I am sure some of you must have known Clara—went apparently quite mad, and rushed wildly from the chalet, and standing on the little platform outside, waving her handkerchief frantically over her head, shouted: 'The Bishop of Lincoln! the Bishop of Lincoln!' And there was the little figure far, far below, toiling slowly, alpenstock in hand, up the side of the glacier. And I remember the utter delightfulness with which the Bishop repaid Clara, when at last he sank on a bench in her chalet and demanded some tea.

Is it not insane of mankind not to want passionately to be such a person? Not to strain every nerve to become such a person?

'The men that held Jesus smote Him and spat on His face. When they had blindfolded Him they struck Him on the face, and the servants did strike him with the

palms of their hands.' Is it not insane of mankind to prefer the service of Caiaphas to the service of Jesus? At any rate, your task and mine is clear. It is to break up all evil combinations against God by the only force which will permanently dissolve all evil ties—the force of prayer and love. It is to teach the Catholic religion in the most expansive way, which is the only successful way, by acquiring and by showing the character of Jesus. And may the dear memory of such as Edward King teach us all that it is the most delightful way also.

Chapter VIII

THE PREFERENCE FOR BARABBAS

Whom will ye . . . Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? —St. Matthew xxvii. 17.

IT would be easy enough to cry 'Jesus' here and now in response to that challenge; it wanted a brave man to do it then, face to face with a gorgeous demonstration of paganised Judaism set dead against our Master.

It is easy to see the scene; above, the Jerusalem April morning sky, the big white clouds trailing across the blue, the strong wind sweeping the crowd. Before us the pretentious white marble façade of the Prætorium with its coarse detail, its debased orientalised Greek architecture. On the raised pavement the disdainful Pilate and

his splendid guard; below, the heaving, gabbling, brown-red and yellow crowd, and in the open space between, the bound and suffering figure of our Lord, to which, in the palace of Herod, a touch of the ludicrous has been added, amid the delighted laughter of the Court, by flinging upon Him in mockery a masquerade dress—some faded robe of state, hunted out of a wardrobe in the palace. This poor, battered, dishevelled, ridiculous figure on the one side, and on the other the picturesque ruffian—the Dick Turpin, Jack Sheppard, Raffles—of the period, who had robbed the Roman officials under a fine pretence of patriotism, and was therefore the darling of the crowd. Yes, it would be as difficult to cry 'Jesus' then, as it would be to cry 'Jesus' to-night in a hundred haunts, restaurants, bars, gambling hells and other places within a mile of the Church of All Saints.

Now as to the significance of these two figures. The Christian Church from the

beginning has had a perfectly clear conviction—a conviction it has sealed ten thousand times with its blood; Jesus Christ, in the belief of the Christian Society, is God—that is to say, the ultimate force. There is no force stronger than He; there is nothing coming after Him which can supersede Him. He is not the pioneer, He is the Goal. And Barabbas is human society in revolt from God, or, what is the same thing, human society organised and acting apart from God and without reference to God.

Here, then, in the blinding sunlight, below the marble steps of the Gabbatha, stand the materials of the human choice in every age. And once a year the Church summons all Christians to the Gabbatha and makes them choose again. 'Whom will ye—Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?' In every country throughout the world the question is put year by year in Passiontide. In the little wooden villages clustering round the

cupolaed Churches across the endless flat desolation of Russia, the peasants are making their choice. In the Coptic Churches of Egypt, where the women sit veiled and apart, and turbaned long-robed men put off their shoes from off their feet and stand in noble ranks before the Lord—the men and women are making their choice. In far-off Abyssinia, whose coal-black people in their robes of black and white, holding their big quarto office books, are among the most recollected Christian worshippers I have ever seen, these unfamiliar brethren of ours are making their choice; that deliberate act of adhesion to one side or the other which the yearly challenge of the Passion forces from us all once more; that adhesion which the followers of Jesus are required to seal on Easter Day in His Body, and in His Blood.

I want, then, to begin to turn your thoughts to your coming participation in the yearly corporate Communion of all the

whole Church militant. In the Easter Communion every Christian living in grace communicates. Every other Communion throughout the year is, therefore, of the nature of a personal preparation for this tremendous corporate act which only occurs at the most about seventy times in a life —the seventy moments out of which eternity is fashioned.

I begin by reminding you of the choice which is involved in it; of the fact that while in the end there is no third alternative, while in the end nobody can slip through between Jesus and Barabbas and get into eternal safety by some clever feint, yet at this moment it is possible to do, not two things in this matter, but four. It is possible to cry Jesus and mean Jesus; it is possible to cry Barabbas and mean Barabbas. But it is also possible to cry Jesus and mean Barabbas and to cry Barabbas and mean Jesus. Pilate's wife did the first of these and Pilate did the second.

Let us consider, then, for a few minutes the character of the choice which is involved in the act of Easter Communion. It is the choice between God on the one hand, and, on the other, human society organised without reference to God, and it is made not here but outside; not in the Church but in the world; not on Sundays but on Mondays. And it consists in a selection between what meets you at home, what meets you in business, what meets you in the streets, what meets you in hours of recreation and of leisure—a selection in which it is very difficult to be perfectly consistent, but in which it makes all the difference whether the inconsistency is more or less conscious, and in which there must be a growing preponderance on one side or the other—a preponderance which is gradually turning you into one sort of man or another.

What does choosing Christ mean? It means doing deliberately, in spite of inherited

weakness and external opposition, what animals do unconsciously; it means living in accordance with the true law of being; it means the conservation of human energy, and so the enrichment of human life. In a word, Christ stands for continence, for the prudent preservation and use of all our powers, bodily, mental, and spiritual, for their true and harmonious combination.

First, then, bodily continence. Christ stands for temperance in eating and drinking, and in recreation, and for a noble control of the sexual impulse, for a noble self-restraint before marriage, and for a noble and fruitful use of marriage. Remember that in this matter of sexual purity the animal level is impossible to man. His choice lies between a line higher than the animal and a line lower than the animal. Temperance and sexual self-restraint enrich the man; indeed, the hard worker in any line of life is forced to them—the athlete, the statesman, the financier. The choice of

Christ means getting the keen sense, the straight eye, the steady head and hand of the temperate, self-controlled man, and getting them not for one of the many lower reasons but for the highest.

Secondly, mental continence. In respect to the mind too, Christ restrains and so enriches. He gives to the powers of the mind their due place and no more among the powers of man. To choose Christ is to remember that since a man's wealth consists not in the things he possesses, consists in nothing external which he can acquire and cling to, so it can never consist in the mere knowledge of things nor in any of the things which earthly knowledge can bestow, success among the merchants, the financiers, the men of letters, the musicians, the artists, the people of social charm. A man exclusively intellectual is as one-sided as a man disproportionately sensual, and to cultivate one branch of knowledge to the exclusion of general human interests is to

carry the one-sidedness into intellectual things themselves. Remember how Darwin confessed that in pursuit of physical science he had lost all appreciation of art and music. He found his only relief in reading novels, which he devoured after cutting each volume into two pieces with a knife.

And thirdly, continence in things spiritual. Here also Christ restrains and so develops. He develops in His followers spiritual force, that highest and, to us, mysterious part of man's composite nature to which science is beginning to give reluctant and puzzled attention. The faithful Catholic Christian is the man who has given his spiritual powers as completely as his bodily and his mental powers to be disciplined and so enriched in the school of Christ. All the great religions of the world have gained their power over men by developing the spiritual force which is latent in us all; and the Englishman who calls himself a Christian, and lives a

materialised life, is far lower down in the scale of living beings than the spiritualised Mohammedan, or Buddhist, or Hindu. To choose Christ is, in a word, to live as God from all eternity has intended us to live.

Now look at Christ's rival, the picturesque freebooter. At first, the mingled lines of black and white in his character, and in his career, are rather bewitching. We are fascinated by the curious juxtaposition of tenderness and violence, of generosity and dishonesty. It is this that makes the charm of all these parti-coloured characters in history. But we know the meaning of this picturesque chaos; the man has created for himself a false centre of gravity, something external to himself in the world instead of God in his own soul. And can you deny when you look at any finished product of this line of development that to do so means dissipation, degradation, destruction?

I remember hearing the present Archbishop of Canterbury tell this story at

Oxford. When he was curate at Leeds he was one day visiting in a tramps' lodging-house, and being interested in the look and in the manner of one of the tramps, he said to him, 'You look to me as if you ought not to be here.'

'Oh!' said the tramp, 'I am an Oxford man. I took my degree in such and such a year'—and he mentioned the name of his college.

'Then, what in Heaven's name,' cried Mr. Lang, 'has brought you to this?'

And the tramp shrugged his shoulders. 'Oh!' he said, 'I have just drifted.'

Well, every priest knows men, and women too, who are steadily, if slowly, descending towards that tramps' lodging-house. They may never reach the tramps' lodging-house in this life, but if they do not pause they may reach it in the next, and it is an ill thing to spend eternity in the tramps' lodging-house.

We all know those people, and the world

knows them, those in whom no real effort is being made against the beginnings of the drink craze; those who are paralysed by the misery of slavery to sexual sin; the financier who has killed all power of recreation; the *blasé* man or woman of pleasure to whom all the luxuries and gaieties of life have become as the apples of Sodom; the hopeless, nervous man of learning hiding in his study from the common experiences of life; perhaps, most horrifying of all, those unhappy beings who dabble with familiar spirits, committing what the Catholic Church throughout all the ages has branded as spiritual fornication, and so disordering their whole natures that, as a well-known student of psychical research once said to me, 'Medium after medium becomes a person of low moral character, and dies an early and a squalid death.'

'Whom will ye—Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?'

Remember the danger that besets your

choice. Those of you who have been to Ammergau will remember how, at this point, the priests hurl themselves into the crowd, and pour their arguments into the ears of the vacillating. Pilate's challenge to-day is always uttered over practical matters and points of detail, and it is public opinion which plays the part of the priests to-day. Public opinion, although in England it does not dare to be broadly anti-Christian, is in practical matters and over points of detail very often false to Jesus Christ; false about the discipline of the body, about indulgence in food and drink; false about strict purity of life; false about the sanctity of the marriage tie; false about the discipline of the mind, inciting a man with never-ending flattery to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; false in its conceptions of the spiritual; unconscious of the holy guardian angels; unmindful of the loving offices of the Saints, blaspheming the spirit by pronouncing it

a function of the body; or curious about spiritualism, palmistry, astrology, the nostrum of the latest quack in spiritual nostrums.

As we face once more our Easter duties, let us remember that we are surrounded by false friends without, and by treacherous impulses within, who cry to us, 'Not this man, but Barabbas.' Let me then remember that every moment of my being should advance me towards the true end of my destiny; that every impulse which obscures that true end, which diverts me from the path towards it, is Barabbas; that I cannot advance a step towards my Easter until I have once more answered this question: 'After all, which is my choice—Barabbas, or Jesus Who is called the Christ?'

Chapter IX

THE DREAM OF PILATE'S WIFE

When he was set down in the judgment seat his wife sent into him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that Just Man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him.—St. Matthew xxvii. 19.

WE are still before the Gabbatha, in front of us is still the ugly, debased Greek marble façade of the Prætorium; here is the raised platform; here are the splendid officials; here behind us is the crowd, brown and red and yellow, and here is still the open space between, with the eternal choice set forth—Jesus or Barabbas. 'Whom will ye—Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?' 'Bar-abbas! Bar-abbas!' first from a single voice, then from an eager group, then one resounding unison, 'Bar-abbas!'

Pilate's face hardened. He got the rulers together again before him. 'Now,' he said,

'I am not going to condemn this man, He does not deserve it; but His teaching has created disorder, and I will make an example of Him. I will have Him scourged and release Him.'

There was silence; then a whisper which became a murmur and grew into a hoarse cry, which was caught up and echoed on the outskirts of the crowd: 'Crucify! crucify!'

'But what has He done?' cried Pilate.

The cry rose higher; it rang across the city; it was heard by the people at prayer in the Temple—'Crucify! crucify! crucify!'

The crowd of officials around the Governor divided, and a page with a salver approached.

'A message from her Excellency.'

Pilate took the tablet from the salver and read it: 'Have thou nothing to do with that Just Man, for I have suffered many things, in the early morning, in a dream because of Him.'

Pilate's unbelief was not the result of

adhesion to any school of philosophic thought. It was not the result of over-specialising in any department of physical science. It was the sort of unbelief we meet with to-day here and there on the Stock Exchange, in the offices and business houses of London, and in London Society. It was the unbelief of the music-hall and of Sunday-up-the-river. It was the unbelief which merely refuses to look beyond the earthly scene, and such unbelief is often accompanied by a good deal of superstition. The curious act which Pilate at once performed showed that he was thrown into a sudden fright.

But now I want to take you away from the Gabbatha, along the marble corridors, over mosaic floors, between hangings of purple and gold; the sounds of the world grow soft, and die, the air grows scented, and the light becomes soothing. This great suite of rooms is the apartment of her Excellency. The servants are moving about

softly and discreetly. Her Excellency has had a bad night, and here at last we find her languidly playing with her dogs and feeding her birds—the great lady who a week afterwards will write to her friends in Rome of the terrible weather which had made her ill, of the dream of impending calamity which had since been sufficiently explained by the extraordinary darkness which had suspended the operations of her dressmaker, and the earthquake which had upset her birdcages and killed two of her piping bullfinches.

Who is Pilate's wife? She is the essentially pagan woman who is just sufficiently aware of the existence of Jesus Christ to be made uncomfortable by the thought of Him, but who is so fenced round by the circumstances of her position and the conventions of her state as to be kept from the service of the Just Man. Am I, then, asking you to take part in rescue work? No! not at all, not in the technical sense.

I am speaking of the majority of women of culture, of position, of means, whom you will meet in London Society between April and July, and I am also speaking of the majority of young ladies who work in the magnificent business establishments of West End London.

How often people have said to me since I have been vicar of All Saints, Margaret Street, 'You know, before the majority of my friends I cannot say a word about my religion. Why, they simply ridicule the whole thing.' No! they do not. That is a mistake. They do not. When her Excellency heard that something was happening out in the sunshine and the wind, corresponding to what she had been dreaming in the early morning among her down pillows and Tyrian coverlids, she spent a very bad half hour. She very seriously considered what she and Pilate should do to avert ill consequences from themselves; and she decided that, being what they were,

they had better do nothing, that the safest thing was to stand uncommitted; so she sent a selfish plea for Jesus to her husband, and in so doing she chose Barabbas. When his wife suggested to Pilate that his line must be to get clear of personal responsibility in the matter, she proved the best ally that Annas and Caiaphas could desire.

That is the true attitude of those people to Jesus Christ. Let us examine it a little more closely in this typical figure, whom legend calls the Lady Claudia Procula. The Lady Claudia had a sense of right and wrong. She knew a just man when she saw one. She had some fragmentary second-hand knowledge of our Lord. She had probably heard some report of His miracles, perhaps, too, the story of the cleansing of the Temple. She may have heard some sayings from His teaching, and have got some notion of His Personality. That really means a rather stronger personal impression of our Lord than the pagan ladies of London

possess. The Church of England has not succeeded in conveying that much to the majority of those who return themselves in a census paper as its members. Although they are baptised, and most of them confirmed, they are living the lives of pagans in uncomfortable proximity to Christianity.

Again, the Lady Claudia had some sort of a belief in the unseen and in the active relation of the unseen to the seen. She strongly suspected that behind this material screen of things there are spirit forces which act on men, which bless or curse, and which it is wisest to propitiate and appease. This vague and uncomfortable belief in the unseen the majority of our countrymen possess. It is not so much with them that they feel it would be unwise altogether to dismiss this side of things. It is that the thing cannot be done. There are yearnings in human nature which dinner, and sleep, and the impulse of sex cannot satisfy ; and so all around us there are men and women

purely material in their general interests and aims, and yet who dream dreams, who have moments in which they think of the unseen, and of the hidden and awful future. Many of these people consult fortune-tellers of all sorts, for with the re-appearance of paganism has re-appeared in the world the whole apparatus of paganism. The frequency with which a priest at work in London finds himself trying to get somebody out of the clutches of this kind of superstition would surprise you. There is a great deal of it among the women of the idler classes. It is spiritual drug-taking.

Yes! I am describing those friends of yours before whom some of you are ashamed to speak of the Catholic Faith. Their earlier years are passed in complete forgetfulness of the unseen. There are thousands and thousands of young women in London to-day who create no scandals and who pass for Christians, but who are not one whit above the level of the young women in Roman

Society contemporary with our Lord ; while year after year our Public Schools turn out hundreds of lads very charming and good-natured, who talk, and smoke cigarettes, but in all other aspects differ very little from the horses they ride and the dogs they train. And then, as years go on, the background of the stage on which these children of an hour play their noisy parts gets darkened, there is a growing background of fright in their lives, there are hideous depressions, there are fits of terror, there are occasional nasty reminders of another side of things—sorrows, pain, catastrophes, funerals.

'No, I don't go to Church,' said a woman of the world, 'it makes me gloomy.' 'I can't go to Church,' said a young man to me ; 'I simply can't. I can't rot and rag in Church, and if I didn't rot and rag continually I should go mad.'

The Lady Claudia and her modern train are people who are nearer the truth about

things when they are dreaming than when they are waking; they are people who, in their waking hours, spend their time in hiding among material things from reality, as an ostrich hides its head in the sand.

And what keeps these modern parallels of Claudia where they are? Only the things which imprisoned Claudia in her gorgeous rooms on the day when Jesus Christ stood before Gabbatha—position, family, politics, friends, superstitions, riches, prejudices, social conventions. There is many a woman who, when she drives past a Church like All Saints, and catches a glimpse of its symbolic form, shudders and says, 'There is nothing for me to do, seeing the position I have gradually got into, but to leave religion alone. I will not offend it, I will do it no harm, I will wish it well, I will try to forget it'; and so she goes on to fulfil her weary round of engagements like a squirrel in its cage, and she grows on and on into a tired, haggard, superstitious pagan, who, whenever

God whispers to her soul 'Remember,' is haunted by the dream of Pilate's wife. And it is before this poor fool, with the brazen face and the quaking heart, that some of you Christian women say you are ashamed of your religion!

Now what shall we do to help her? Tell her that she has misunderstood herself; that she has lost her way. Tell her that she was designed from all eternity to exhibit in her own unique way a reflection of the Divine beauty. Tell her that she can never get rid of that responsibility. Tell her that she can never escape from God, Who is closer to her than her own body, Who is not good-natured in the sense that He can be cajoled, Who never changes His mind, Who is the unchanging Law, of Whom the Greeks thought rightly under one of His aspects when they conceived of Him as Nemesis. Tell her that the time of choice is short, and that the choice is irrevocable. Tell her that it is utterly impossible for her

to have nothing to do with Jesus Christ. It is He that is ' closer to her than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.' It is from Him she gets the powers which she squanders in futility. Tell her she can reject the Saviour, but only to meet Him as the Judge, not only in a far-off future, but here and now ; tell her that that dark background to her life is the anger of Jesus ; that those fits of terror mean the wrath of the Lamb.

But finally tell her, and before you tell her, once again tell yourselves, that in a sinful world, to succeed where Claudia failed, means to go all the way with Jesus Christ. In the Tate Gallery there is a picture of a girl who succeeded where Claudia failed, and who went all the way with Jesus Christ. When the torturers tore her body with their irons, Eulalia said, ' Lord, they are writing on my body that Thou art mine.' And then they brought flaming torches to her torn body and to her face, and the virgin

martyr drank the flames and died. It was cold December, and the leaden sky overhung the market-place where Eulalia died, and a bitter wind searched it. Night fell, the square lay desolate and empty, the snow fell on the naked body of the dead girl and robed it in white. And then, long centuries after, there came a spring—a glorious Church enshrined the relics of the virgin martyr, and Prudentius, the Christian poet, called the girls and boys to do honour to her festival. 'Gather violets and blood-red crocus,' sang Prudentius, 'for winter here is mild and the thawing ice unbinds the fields to fill your baskets full of flowers. Girls and boys, bring presents of them, while I among you weave my garland, the garland of my verses, my garland poor and fading, and yet the garland of a holy day.'

. . . . . .

The weather had changed on Good Friday evening; there was a soft, calm sunset, and Pontius and Claudia dined together as usual.

The Just Man had disappeared. But they will meet Him again, and till then, throughout the ages and throughout the lands which then formed the Empire Pilate served, from Emperor to pauper, every man, when he professes his faith, solemnly registers the fact ' crucified under Pontius Pilate.'

Chapter X

THE IRRESPONSIBILITY OF PILATE

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person ; see ye to it.

Then answered all the people, and said : His blood be upon us, and on our children.—St. Matthew xxvii. 24, 25.

HEN we went, in the last chapter, to the apartment of the Lady Claudia, we left Pilate reading a note. He read it more than once, and seemed to find it difficult to decipher. He sat for a minute, his brows bent, puzzled, frightened, brooding. Then he thought of a well-known Jewish expedient for getting clear of the guilt. The thing he did was not a Roman thing ; it was a Jewish thing—a thing he had never done before in his life, and never meant to do again ; and the fact that he did it shows that he was thoroughly frightened. He called

for a basin, a napkin, and water, and, rising from his place, he dipped his hands into the water, and said ceremonially, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.'

'Then answered all the people and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."'

When Claudia was frightened, she said, 'Let us get rid of the responsibility'; but Pilate sinned against a clearer light. Everything that was best in him chose Jesus. He had had the Just Man in front of him for some time now, and in order to gain the courage to follow Claudia's advice, Pilate found it necessary to make the strongest possible suggestion to himself that he had no responsibility to get rid of, that the matter was beyond his control. 'I cannot help it.' Let us take that common excuse as our subject.

Well, we cannot press irresponsibility on a large scale, can we? To preach that men in general are not responsible for what they

do is to banish morality and to get rid of the conception of duty. If I can no more govern my actions than I can catch my shadow, then I must not be condemned if I live like a pig or a rattlesnake; to blame the criminal becomes unjust—the poor dear criminal is merely the sport of influences. He is simply the victim of an unfortunate environment; and so murder and toothache and falsehood and earache are alike to be pitied and petted.

No! the whole fabric of society is built on the supposition of moral freedom, and, therefore, of personal responsibility. For although the universe is one of unvarying law, man's attitude towards that law is unlike the attitude of any other creature. Men cannot reverse the laws of the universe, but they can handle them freely and produce new results. They can act in a way which looks very like freedom, and men have assumed that what looks like freedom is freedom, and acting on that assumption

they have developed from savages to what we see to-day.

That looks—does it not?—as if the assumption had somehow hit the mark. Further, they have always assumed that they have a power of moral self-government akin to their power over physical nature. At first sight, I admit, it looks otherwise. At first sight it looks as if, after all, men were always governed by whatever happened to be the strongest influence upon them at the moment; and I have no doubt that many anti-Christian friends of yours have said that to you in the past. That is very nearly true, but not quite true, and that fact makes all the difference. It is true that we always act upon motive; but it is also true that we retain the power of selecting between our motives. We do not run mechanically at the thing which attracts us most. We have the power of halting, of comparing, of considering. For example, let me suppose I stand between

two motives, A and B. A is stronger than B. If A remains stronger than B, I shall act on A; but I have the power of calling up C, and flinging C into the scale with B, thus making B and C stronger than A.

Mankind is by nature morally free, but moral freedom has been gradually affected and limited by inherited tendency and by social environment. There are probably people who read these words who, morally free by the constitution of their natures, are, by the misfortune of their history, in chains; and the whole world has had a twist given to its moral nature away from God and away from integrity.

Now that was the situation which our Lord faced. That was what He came to remedy. 'The spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised.'

'I cannot help it,' you say. No, and that was why God became incarnate. No one can escape Jesus Christ by saying, 'I am not one of your saints; I was born passionate; I was born intemperate; I was born earthly, sensual, devilish. I can never become one of your saints. Look at my environment. I live in the world of commerce, the world to which your precepts have never had entrance yet. I am a milliner—you know what the talk of the work-room is like. I live in London as a barrister, a solicitor, an actor, an artist—you know what the temptations of the town are. I am the most hopeless of all mortals, the man or woman with enough to live on and nothing to do.'

And our Lord's reply to all that is: 'If so, then you and your ills are My first concern. It is because you are earthly, sensual, devilish, that I now stand bound before you, not to judge you yet, but to save you still. True, your nature is corrupt; true,

your environment is degrading; but to the succour of your corrupt humanity, I bring the Human Nature which was "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary"; and against the evils of your environment I set the shelter, the light, the love of My Church.'

'I cannot help it!' Look back at Pilate washing his hands before the mob. 'I have no power to choose in this matter,' says Pilate, 'it only remains for me to disclaim all responsibility. I will disclaim it publicly. I will celebrate a solemn sacrament of irresponsibility.' But Pilate deceived himself. When he tried to think that he was bound and could disclaim responsibility he was really free and making his choice. Between Barabbas and Jesus he had no doubt at all. It was quite clear which of the two he preferred. In his heart of hearts he chose Jesus. But then he found himself invited to another choice. 'If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend';

and at once he stood, this tormented man, between Jesus and Tiberius; between conscience and expediency; between principle and self-interest. So he said, 'I am neutral'; but neutrality meant self-interest; expediency, Tiberius.

'Barabbas! Barabbas!' yelled the mob. 'Pah! what disgusting taste,' said Pilate; 'I do not choose at all'; but in refusing to choose, Pilate chose, and he chose not God, but Cæsar.

We must look very much at home because either we have made or we are about to make our self-examination and confession before Easter Communion. This is a time of introspection. Now it is an appalling thought that it is possible to make a confession to God which is full and complete, but which has no more moral value than the hand-washing of Pilate, because it is a confession of pretended irresponsibility. Ah, those confessions of unconscious self-justification; the placid, convinced way in which

the penitent will think of himself as a being who is periodically quite beyond his own control. 'I am this sort of person'; 'I do that sort of thing'; 'Of course, I cannot help so and so.'

Now what is a preparation for Easter Communion of that sort but the hand-washing of Pilate—a sacrament of irresponsibility? Such a preparation amounts to no more than 'I will not be considered to have any real complicity in those things which occur with such periodical persistency in my life. I am very sorry, I am sure; I wish they never occurred. Behold me repudiating them. I do not want to have anything to do with them. Let me admit my fault, *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.* There, I have extricated myself. I am clean. I have washed my hands of all responsibility, O Lord, and so will I go to Thine altar.'

But that is not penitence. What is the meaning of a Church, of a service in a Church?

It is not an end in itself. It exists for the perfecting of human character and for no other purpose. It does not exist to gratify people's polite taste for music, or oratory, or for pictorial beauty. Grace does not abound that we may continue in sin. The Sacrament of Penance is not an instrument whereby grace is occasionally poured over an intractable unchanging creature like a wash-pot out of which water is poured over a china cup. Altar, font, pulpit, faldstool of penitence—they are the varied resources of a garden whose flowers and fruit are the most glorious beings which the world has ever seen—the Catholic Saints.

Therefore, let us examine our self-examination. Let us be quite clear that we are not people who try to stand between Christ and sin, with hands clean of both, complacently prepared to begin the old life again after Easter, the old life of being drawn sometimes towards the left, towards material self-interest, sometimes towards the right,

towards Jesus Christ. If our amendment means less than a quiet determination to withstand the Devil, the world, and the flesh for the sake of our Lord, we, in our vacillation, have become His enemies.

If there are any good people who have been disturbed by these remarks let me say a word to them. Do not be frightened about venial sin. The conquest of venial sin is a life-long task, but our Lord will help you about it. This is quite certain; it is within the power of any Christian to live the life and to do the work which God ordains for him or her to do. Do not hang back from Christian service from a sense of unworthiness. Grace is always given with the call to work. Remember how once, long ago, the voice of a little child came to an anxious, nervous Christian and cried, 'Ambrose shall be Bishop.' That was the call of God to one of His noblest Saints; and believe it, if a voice simple and innocent within you seems to be calling you to higher service,

perhaps to some definite work for the outcast, or the poor, perhaps to the mission-field, perhaps to the priesthood, perhaps to the religious life, it would be faithlessness to disobey that call because of a consciousness of sinful infirmity. He Who calls you will give you the grace of perseverance. God can break down the prison bars of natural temperament.

It is Palm Sunday night, the first of a series of nights on the Mount of Olives for a group of men for whom as the days went on the situation grew more desperate. See this gloomy, hopeless man sitting near the Master in stony silence, Thomas, called Didymus. He was the first witness to the Deity of his Lord. See this burning spirit panting to strike a physical blow in his Master's cause, John the son of Zebedee. He became the Apostle of Love. See this loving, vacillating man racked between loyalty and fright—Simon son of Jonas. He became the great St. Peter, the Rockman,

Prince of the Apostles, the shadow of whose robe brought health and healing ; and far away from Jerusalem, in some distant place, see this fiery young Pharisee enforcing on some Jewish settlement an enactment of the Sanhedrim—Saul of Tarsus. He became the Apostle of the Grace of God.

As on Palm Sunday night you turn desperate, frightened eyes towards your Master, dazzled by the glitter of His foes, He only asks you one question—'Dost thou believe ?'

'All things are possible to him that believeth.'

Chapter XI

SIMON OF CYRENE, THE MAN WHO WAS FORCED TO CARRY THE CROSS

And as they came out they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear His cross.—St. Matthew xxvii. 32.

THE sentiment of the Church canonised the centurion who presided over the crucifixion of Jesus. It also canonised the penitent robber who appears in the calendar as St. Bonus Latro. But although there is a tradition that he afterwards became a Christian, the Church has not canonised Simon of Cyrene.

He was a conspicuous figure in the thought of the Apostolic Church. He is mentioned by name in the first three Gospels; his sons, Alexander and Rufus, are spoken of as though they were well-known Christians; but the Church, so far as I know, has given to Simon no mark of her approbation.

I take him, then, as the man who is forced by cruel necessity to carry the cross of Jesus, whose will consents to the extent of animating his body to do the material task, and no further.

The suggestion of the story is that he was a well-known settler from Cyrene in North Africa, that he lived on the outskirts of the city and was coming into town in the ordinary way in the morning, having heard nothing of the disturbance of the previous night. By what he would regard as an appalling stroke of misfortune, he was passing through the city gate just as the death procession was coming out, and at the moment when our Lord's strength collapsed under the weight of the cross. The scourging had made it physically impossible for the condemned to carry the wood of His cross all the way. There was a moment of difficulty; no one in the crowd would touch the defiling boards, and the soldiers in a flash of inspiration caught and impressed

this strong, solid, comfortable-looking man into their service, and thrust the blood-stained boards upon him. There was nothing for it but to set his teeth, square his shoulders, and do the job. It must have taken him some time to recover from the shock of the incident, and while he was doing his best to forget it, it would have seemed the delusion of a madman to think that, forget it as he might, it would cause him to be held in eternal remembrance. ' If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.'

My point is this : every single man who does not of his own free will accept the Cross is caught and forced to carry it against his will. There is no escaping the Cross altogether. Everyone must carry the Cross willingly or unwillingly.

For consider ! we are all the product of a civilisation that is based on Christian ethics, and many centuries of it have produced an almost intolerably sensitive race of people.

Pain, sickness, sorrow, death are vastly more terrible to us than they are to the Chinese or to the Japanese ; they are vastly more terrible to us than they were to our own ancestors in Plantagenet or Tudor times. There are thousands of men in London to-day who curse the religion of the Cross, and well they may if they do not accept it ; for, like the dead albatross in *The Ancient Mariner*, the wood of the Cross hangs day and night from their wretched throats. Christianity produces an intolerable situation for everybody who does not accept it.

For example, we hear a great deal of claptrap talked in the more ingenuous kind of melodrama about the sweetness of the English home, but the majority—the great majority—of English homes are not sweet. My impression is that more than half the boys in our English Public Schools come from homes which cannot be described as 'happy.' The home which is supposed to be a Christian home, but which is not, is

a disorderly, squalid place. A well-ordered Mohammedan home in Turkey or in Persia is far happier, far sweeter, much more pleasing to God. Oh, the squalid strife, and the ugly selfishness, and the ungovernable temper which characterises many homes. And in how many others, where life is monotonously dull and stagnant, is there a complete absence of sweetness and light!

How many a man who has never accepted the Cross comes into the City in the morning with a curse on his lips and this ghastly cross of an ugly home-life clinging like a great parasite to his unwilling shoulders! And he does not find his burden lightened here—long hours, monotonous work, rare holidays, the ever-growing competition, the haunting thought that if he fall out of his place through sickness a hundred others will struggle to get into it; the sensitive pride in him which every slight and unkindness, real or fancied, wounds. That is his life-long lot, and he has no philosophy with

which to meet it except the philosophy of Simon of Cyrene—'It is a disgusting business, but I am in for it, and I must set my teeth and square my shoulders, and go through with it.'

Every man who is worth his salt and is not a Christian, fashions his life by that sort of uncouth and unintelligent stoicism. But even in his own opinion it fails him pitiably at times; it fails him in face of death—the death of a parent, or brother, or child. He is of Christian stock; he has been baptised; Christianity has penetrated him and infected him; he can never meet death for himself or for others with indifference. It is, for all his ungodly bravado, 'the King of Terrors' to him. No, under the shock of sorrow he snatches at the Christian consolations, he falls into the Christian phraseology. Here he is at the funeral, with his woe-begone face, in his black clothes, desperately trying to catch some of the hope and assurance which

pervade the Christian service; but it cannot be done. It is still Simon of Cyrene who drags the heavy boards of his cross to the edge of the grave, and back to the empty home.

So live a multitude of English people.

What Buddhist, what Confucianist, what Mohammedan, watching the faces of the London crowd surging round the tube station in Oxford Street, could say: 'These people have a great and blessed secret which I do not possess'? Would he not rather say, 'How hard and desperate these people look. What restless eyes, what knit brows, what hurried, impatient, disordered movements! How many of them have a furtive, suspicious, almost guilty look! And these are the followers of Jesus! How greatly has that prophet been over-estimated!'

No! Eastern thinker, no! these are not the followers of Jesus; these are not the people who have:

Clasped the Cross with a light laugh
And wrapped the burning robe round, thanking God.

These are the unwilling people on whom the curse of the Cross is resting, the people who refuse to accept the principle upon which their civilisation is based, but who cannot escape from the situation it has created. These are the followers of Simon of Cyrene.

It is a profoundly pathetic fact that all the best of our unwilling cross-bearers have an ideal of conduct in the matter. To the good-hearted man who has never accepted the principle of the Cross, the highest conduct consists in taking it up and carrying it under the impetus of a sort of moral necessity.

He will always match your story of a Saint with a story of a man who was anything but a Saint, but who, nevertheless, did the same thing. And he will always suggest to you that his man did a finer thing in doing the noble action from an unexplained involuntary impulse than your saint who was moved to the same action by Christian principle. In other words, supposing Simon of Cyrene, when he saw what he was expected

to do, did it *con amore*, and offered our Lord, moved by an impulse of compassion, a ready and sympathetic assistance, the unwilling cross-bearer would consider him one of the noblest characters in the Gospels, and would be extremely contemptuous of the judgment of the Church, who has canonised the man who said, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom,' but has not canonised the good-hearted fellow who did what the unwilling cross-bearer calls 'such an awfully decent thing.'

Let us reflect to-night that the unwilling cross-bearer is mistaken. It is not the action which matters most, but the principle on which the action is based, and a sudden impulse to altruism ranks very low down in the scale of motive indeed. I suppose there is no more mixed assemblage in England than the men who have gained the Victoria Cross and the Albert Medal. Before the throne in Buckingham Palace it will

never be possible to distinguish between the full-blooded man, who was forced to do the great deed in the intoxication of animal excitement under the impulse of good fellowship, and the stainless knight, who, remembering Calvary, gathered all the forces of his being up into a supreme act of self-oblation, and offered his sword at the shrine of death. But before the Throne of Heaven there will be a redistribution of honours.

As Palm Sunday returns, once more God the Son stands before us vested in perfect human nature, showing us how to live and how to die. You and I both bear the Cross, and shall bear it until death, but it makes all the difference in the world, in this world and in the next, whether we have bent our shoulders to receive it from our Lord, or whether it has been forced upon us by the hard and grinding conditions of the life we live.

As I look back through my ministry, and recall the people among whom I have

worked, how triumphant is the memory of those who have taken up their Cross and followed Christ, those who have borne all anxiety, suffering, sickness, and sorrow, as the Will of God out of love for God !

As the Will of God, out of love for God ! There shines the motive of the Cross, the motive which the world's experience has proved to be the all-conquering one. ' Come unto Me all ye who travail and are heavy laden,' cries our Lord to that endless stream of burdened wretches, the followers of Simon of Cyrene. ' Take My yoke upon you,' He cries, as with loving, eager fingers He shifts the burden, and lo ! its chafing weight is gone. ' Learn of Me,' He cries, in tender love, throwing His arm round His new disciple, and supporting him deftly along the way of sorrows, ' for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest. Yes, rest for your souls.'

Chapter XII

THE MAN WITH THE ANODYNE, THE PROFESSIONAL PHILANTHROPIST ON CALVARY

And they offered Him wine mingled with myrrh, but He received it not.—St. Mark xv. 23.

IF the traditional site of Calvary is the real one, and people are more and more inclined to agree that in all probability it is, then you must picture Calvary as Tissot draws it, quite a small knoll and outcrop of rock by the roadside close to the gate, and commanded by the wall of the city.

The top of the wall was no doubt lined with people at nine o'clock on Good Friday morning; people who were in a position to see the preparation for the executions which was being made inside the square of soldiers.

At some point during these proceedings we must imagine a civilian coming out of the city and being admitted, after a word to the centurion, inside the guarded square. He carried a flask and a cup. The Jews had a custom of giving a large dose of drugged wine to criminals who were about to be executed. The loving delight of finding parallels at all points with Old Testament anticipations may easily lead us to mistake this incident. To offer the Redeemer of the world a cup of drugged wine as a solace, was an offering so inadequate as to be an insult. And so it may be said to illustrate the saying, 'They gave Me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty they gave Me vinegar to drink'; but it was not meant as an insult, it was meant as a kindness. A guild of ladies existed in Jerusalem for the maintenance of this charity, and the civilian was probably a paid agent. He was none the worse for that. He would be chosen for his rectitude, and probably undertook the

distressing office, like a Florentine brother of the Misericordia, from a sense of duty. Nothing could have been more jarring for him than to have to fulfil his office during the Passover, but he did not fail. We see him filling the cup and offering it in turn to the condemned. We see the robbers drain the cup : we see the Saviour take it in His hand and raise it to His lips as though to pledge the kindness of those who had sent it. He tasted the wine in honour of their deed, but He did not drink : He must go to His death clear-headed and with all His human faculties at His disposal.

I take this incident as symbolical of a movement from the margin of Christianity towards the centre ; the movement of a person who feels he cannot stand altogether and for ever apart from the Figure who wears the crown of thorns and bears the five wounds, but whose movement is wholly inadequate. Our Lord recognises and acknowledges all that is good in it, but He

cannot accept it as a contribution towards His own movement for the redemption of the world.

The centre of Christianity is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It was the Gospel of the Cross and the Resurrection on which the Church was founded ; and the original attractive force was the personalities of preachers plainly reborn and entered into an emancipated and higher order of being through their acceptance of the facts they preached. Why did the announcement of the Gospel so immediately gain the attention of some of its hearers ?

As things are in this disordered world, the Divine Father is misrepresented by the incidence of His own laws ; they often seem to act unreasonably upon a race which has thrown itself out of true relation to them. This is the meaning of the clamour ' God is not just, God is not good.' Take the case of some fair girl, some fair boy, stricken down by an incurable disease just as life

seems to be opening out happily before them. Is not this evidence that there is no good God? Yes, perhaps, taken by itself; but it may be part of some universal scheme imperfectly comprehended, the final result of which justifies such a step in the process.

The central fact of Christianity is the fact that the Divine Son came into the world to prove that this is the case, and to reveal the loving Fatherhood of God in His own Person by submitting to the most tragic incidence of His laws that can be imagined. And the reason why the announcement of the Gospel so immediately gained attention, was that it gave the answer mankind was longing to hear given to its most urgent question. To the man who is convinced that this is true, life is absolutely changed. If this is true, we cannot do otherwise than base our lives on this fact. Christ cannot possibly be less to us than our personal Saviour; we cannot do otherwise than seek to live

as He would approve, and in as close a union as possible with Him Whom the grave could not hold.

And if it is not true? If it is not true, then Calvary is only one further bit of evidence, and the ugliest bit of all, that God is not good. If this is only one more instance of the cruel incidence of natural law, then the best thing to do, since man has risen superior to the force which gave him existence, is to proclaim philanthropy as the highest virtue, and organise it to mitigate in so far as it can the brutality of the laws of the universe, and to right the wrongs committed by the higher powers.

Look again, then, at our Lord and the man with the anodyne; observe that they claim to represent two methods of dealing with the evil in the universe. Our Lord claims, by His sacrifice, to be destroying it at its roots; the man with the anodyne proposes to mitigate the horrors of a situation which is beyond his control. And

any movement back from the margin to the centre must bring a man to stand on Calvary, committed to one or other of these two standpoints—the standpoint of the Cross or the standpoint of the anodyne—and the first is Christianity at its own centre, the second is paganism at the centre of Christianity.

Let us put all this bluntly into the terms of modern life. Christianity, as the centuries have gone on, has expressed itself in two ways—in organisations of charity and in monuments of art—both of them concrete embodiments of its spirit, embodiments of the new charity which was the new *joie de vivre* born of faith and hope. The whole world, Christian and pagan, admires these expressions of the Christian spirit. The hospitals and orphanages and countless schemes for human welfare; the music, the pictures, and the Churches. And very often a person on the margin, with some tendencies towards the centre, wishes to

know whether he cannot be accepted as of the centre if he makes personal contributions to Christian charity or Christian art without committing himself further. The answer is, No. On Calvary you must choose between God on the Cross and the man with the anodyne. Christian art is only of the centre if it proceeds from the impulse which sent the martyrs to their death; if it is not, it is merely imitative.

When Edward the Confessor built his Church at Westminster, he sought to express his union with Christ crucified in an outward form, and set it to be a stone of witness on the soil of England. When Gian Galeazzo Visconti built the Certosa at Pavia, he was probably animated by a hope that it might count on the right side of a highly unsatisfactory balance-sheet which must some day come before the Divine Auditor, and if so, it is no more in origin a Christian building than is the Colosseum, which was completed by a far better man, the Emperor Titus.

We are all clear that God will not accept a Church in lieu of a true discipleship of the Crucified.

Are we quite sure that we understand that for the same reason He also will not accept a hospital or an orphanage or a reform of the Poor Law or any organisation for human welfare? Are we quite sure that we understand that Christian charities, like Christian art, are only of the centre if they proceed from the impulse which sent the martyrs to their deaths, and that if they are not they are merely imitative?

We can hear a mediæval apologist for paganism at the centre: 'Yes, it is true my husband has had three Jews killed and has taken all their ducats, but the dogs deserved no better; and he is most certainly a devout Christian, for he has presented a beautiful silver statue of Our Lady, with real emeralds and rubies in it, to Westminster Abbey.' 'Abominable!' you say. 'That doesn't make a Christian; the man

is a ruffian!' And we can hear a modern apologist for paganism at the centre: 'Yes, it is true that my husband had to do with those transactions you are criticising, but, as he says, it is only business men who understand business, and he is certainly a most Christian man, for he not only pays for a pew at St. Justin's Church, he has lately given £3,000 to the Home for Superannuated Taxi-drivers.' I hope you are prepared to say, 'Rubbish!—that's no better.'

'But,' says somebody, 'that is not fair; you are describing pseudo-philanthropy; how about the serious people who make a business of charitable organisation, and insist that it is the truly important part of Christianity?' They are the more serious enemies of the Cross. They are making the forms of Christian charity more important than that on which Christian charity is based, the acceptance of the power and example of Christ crucified. They are pitting a lesser

sacrifice of their own device—which after all is only the pouring out of an anodyne—against the Divine Sacrifice. You cannot get away from it. If the Divine Compassion expressed itself upon Calvary, that is the central fact of human history; and the pursuit of philanthropy in a spirit which ignores the central fact of human history is the pursuit of philanthropy in a Christian guise, but in a spirit antagonistic to Christ. To aim at the alleviation of human suffering, not as a detail in the Divine plan, but in place of bringing suffering mankind to the bleeding feet of the crucified Saviour, is to give the Saviour gall to eat, and when He is thirsty for the souls of men, to give Him vinegar to drink.

But there must be a last word. We must not end this meditation in the spirit of the Pharisee. We are of the centre. We have not the smallest doubt that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world. We know it to be insanity to have any other

basis of conduct than faith in His Cross. How far have we the spirit of the centre? To be wholly controlled by the spirit of Calvary is to be perfect; but in so far as we are not controlled by it, ours is the spirit of the margin.

We are very faulty people, all of us, but we must take the characters which we have, and ask our Lord to work through them and improve them as He does so. We are kindly folk, and there is not one of us who would not alleviate suffering when it came before him, but that is only an incident in the task which has been set us. For we are Christians cleansed by the precious blood, and our task is to bring all men within the range of its power, and we can only do that by irradiating the love with which Christ fills the hearts of His children, and the force which irradiates it is the force of self-sacrifice in union with the Sacrifice of the Cross.

Chapter XIII

THE MAN WITH THE SPONGE AND THE REED, THE GOOD-NATURED MAN ON CALVARY

IN the last chapter we were at Calvary at a quarter to nine; we return there at a quarter to three, and of the events which took place between a quarter to three and three, I will give a harmony of the Gospels.

'And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, and at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani," which is, being interpreted, "My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me!" And some of them which stood by, when they heard it, said, "Behold, he calleth Elias!" After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished

that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, "I thirst." Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar, and one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar and put it on a reed and gave Him to drink, saying, "Let alone: let us see whether Elias will come to take Him down." When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, "It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and having said this, He bowed His head and gave up the Ghost.'

The subject of this chapter is to be the good-natured man on Calvary. It must therefore be a contrast in ideals, a contrast between the ideal of Calvary and the ideal of the good-natured man. Let us look first at the good-natured man who chanced to find himself on Calvary. As the profound darkness of the three hours began to pass away, the spectators, relieved of their oppression and fear, began to gather in knots around the crosses. Suddenly, from the central cross came a loud and piercing cry:

'My God, My God, why didst Thou forsake Me?'

The spectators looked up with curiosity. 'What did He say?—He is calling to Elijah,' said somebody, and there was a burst of laughter and a prolonged chuckle of amusement.

'Where is Elijah? Why does not Elijah come?'

After some silence the Figure spoke again, now in faint tones: 'I am thirsty.'

There was more laughter. 'Here is a chance for Elijah—let us see if Elijah will come and give him a drink.'

But there was a good-natured man in the crowd, and his eyes went to the big earthenware jar of sour wine which the soldiers had brought and which was standing near the cross. It had been corked with sponge and wax, and the sponge now lay on the ground beside it. The good-natured man picked up the sponge, he looked this way and that for something to fix it to, and then

disappeared down the knoll. He had seen a caper plant in the distance. He broke off a stalk, and came back with the sponge and the stalk to the jar of posca. Tilting the jar gently, he began to soak the sponge. There was a chorus of protests—'No, no, no!—don't do that; Elijah must do that.' The good-natured man felt horribly ashamed of his good nature, but his good nature got the better of his shame; he stuck the soaked sponge on top of the caper-stalk and tried to carry the matter off with a joke—'Now then, He will be ready for Elijah when Elijah comes to take Him down.' But he held the sponge carefully to the lips of the Figure, and took pains to give the Figure the opportunity of relieving Its thirst.

Presently the Figure raised Its head, and in a loud, clear tone, said, 'It is finished!'

'I suppose,' thought the good-natured man, 'He means He's had enough.'

So he squeezed out the sponge and put

it back by the jar, threw away the caper-stalk, and wiped his hands, wet with wine, on his tunic.

But he had begun to feel a certain dull personal interest in the Figure, and he stayed to watch Him.

'Father,' said the Figure—and in a tone of such intimate nearness to the Being addressed, that the good-natured man looked round hastily to see if he could see the victim's father among the bystanders—'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.'

Then His head fell forward, and there was a collapse of the whole Figure.

'By Moses!' said the good-natured man, 'I believe the poor fellow's dead!'

We have been considering that immense ring of persons who look at Christianity from the outside or treat it trivially; the unhappy pagans of England who, owing to the circumstances of their lives, can never altogether lose sight of the Figure which

wears the crown of thorns and bears the five wounds, and that large admixture of people who stand with the pagans, the people who know Who Christ is, who do not deny His claims, but who keep themselves at a distance from Him, refuse to take any trouble about Him, trifle with Him. We described these people as 'on the margin of Christianity.' And we began to consider a movement from the margin to the centre with which we are very familiar, the movement of a person who asks whether he cannot be accepted as of the centre if he makes personal contribution to the self-expression of Christianity in charity, without committing himself as to its truth. And we saw that the answer is 'No.'

If the Divine Compassion expressed itself upon the Cross, and in doing so created a redemptive force for man, that is the central fact of human history, and to pursue philanthropy, ignoring the central fact of history instead of basing our efforts upon it and

allying them to it, is to pursue philanthropy in a spirit antagonistic to Christ; it is to offer mankind an anodyne instead of the indispensable, bitter medicine of the Cross.

But you say, 'If the man with the anodyne stands for paganism at the centre, that cannot be said of the good-natured man.' Do we not see a momentary flash of Christ-like impulse in the good-natured man? Did not Christ say that 'Whosoever shall give a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple shall by no means lose his reward'? Yes, He did; and we are sure that the good-natured man has received his reward. But momentary flashes, any number of them, any number of generous impulses, do not transfer a man from the margin of Christianity to the centre. Which is your favourite of these two figures —the man with the anodyne or the good-natured man? I believe you are saying that it is the good-natured man. But you are wrong. You are choosing Esau, the good-natured animal, in preference to Jacob, the

imperfect man. And that is wrong choice, for Jacob stands for purpose and Esau stands for impulse. The man with the anodyne had a purpose, and a good purpose as far as it went, though an inadequate purpose; the good-natured man had no purpose, he merely acted on impulse.

Here then is my point: impulse will not take a man from the margin to the centre, and you cannot be a disciple on impulse, nothing short of purpose will do. And to one antagonist to the Gospel of the Redemption who has tried to help mankind with wrongly conceived purpose, there are a hundred who are antagonists because they merely act on impulse and have no redemptive purpose in their lives at all. When our Lord rejected the third temptation, the temptation of the high mountain, the temptation to build His Church upon the foundation of the goodness which He found in the world, He thereby made an assertion about human nature which is often forgotten. He asserted that

fallen humanity is not like a broken image of gold, every fragment of which possesses its share of the original purity of the metal. He asserted that everything human is disordered and impoverished, and that He had to go back behind everything mankind possessed, and appeal to the one impulse which, in so far as it exists, remains unaffected by the Fall, the impulse of faith.

And so Christ cannot accept good nature in lieu of faith. What do we mean by good nature? Only an impoverished shadow of the love with which God designed to dower human nature, an impoverished shadow of love which occupies itself with the details of earthly comfort.

A good-natured man does not lose his temper, for his supreme desire is to keep things easy and comfortable all round him. He does not care for anything else sufficiently to mind parting with things, so he gets an easy character for unselfishness. He intensely dislikes the spectacle of discomfort.

He looks forlorn in a tragic situation, like a swallow in a snowstorm, and ridiculous in a solemnity. Indeed he defends himself against the poignancy of human experience by the shield of his amiability, and against the need of purpose he sets the fact of his natural impulse towards comfort all round. 'I need not think about suffering,' he says, 'until I meet it, because I shall always be kind whenever I am brought face to face with it.' So far from having a purpose, this indolent good nature is ashamed of its involuntary altruism, and protects itself with a joke while it holds the sponge to the lips of the dying Christ. It does not seem easy to make a hero of such a man, yet that is what the world is doing to-day; the man of careless life and generous impulse is the hero of to-day. He has taken the place of the Figure of the Crucified.

What is the meaning of the wide prevalence of the cult of the good-natured man? The average modern man thinks he has

proved that he can get on as well without the Gospel of the Divine Compassion upon Calvary as with it. He once said his prayers; he has given up saying them, and there is no difference. He lives his life, he has his pleasures, worries, anxieties, successes, and the Gospel of the Divine Compassion has no place in them. He does not want Christ crucified; He thinks he gets on perfectly well without Him.

Mr. Studdert Kennedy puts it well. 'The man's trouble is twofold: First, he does few things naturally, and least of all his thinking. He starts natural as a child, but then conventions and civilisation and other people's ideas and the realisation of his mastery of so much come in, and he ceases to be natural. If the stars and the mountains and the spring speak to him of God, he says to himself, "Don't be a fool; remember evolution, science, Darwin," and he mixes himself a whisky-and-soda instead of falling on his knees. If he falls in love,

he keeps a tight hand on himself unless the prospects are good, and he gratifies his passions in the meantime with precaution. Born with the child-heart, he has become a cynic. The one thing which might save him is not there. Why is it that the living Christ, the power of the spirit, the passion of God for souls, never seize on him and rock his soul to its foundations till he cries out, "Depart from me or else inflame me," one or the other, but either in an agony? Why? Because he has quietly, silently set himself against the Christ.'

Do not let us be taken in any more by the generous-looking, good-natured man who lives within sight of Calvary. He is there because at some time or other he has had the great choice offered him, and he has deliberately refused the Gospel of the Divine Compassion. The magnificent young gentleman of the cinema, and Mr. Wells's Kipps, and Mr. Pett Ridge's Bert and Alf and 'Arry, they are all in the same boat, they

all think they are like Rider Haggard's Umslopogaas, but they are not—they are merely some of the baptised who have refused to venerate the Cross. Turn from the good-natured man and look at the Crucifix. On Passion Sunday it will be veiled, and when it is next revealed to you it will be at the moment of the Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday, when during the singing of the Reproaches you will have the yearly opportunity of kissing the Sacred Feet. Look at the Crucifix and meditate upon the awful deliberateness of the redemptive process . . . the agony, the bloody sweat, the mockery, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the way of the cross, the nailing to the wood, the parting with friends, the darkness of the great withdrawal, the exceeding bitter cry, the accomplishment of the Scriptures, the solemn verdict, the return to the Father. If St. Thomas is right and this is indeed our Lord and our God, is not this the fact upon which all our life must be based?

Must not our life be a life not of impulse but of purpose, of deliberate redemptive purpose in union with the purpose of Calvary ?

> A broken heart, a fount of tears,
> Ask, and they will not be denied,

for I hope nobody to-day will ever think again that it will do as well to offer the Crucified a glass of claret.

Chapter XIV

THE CENTURION, THE SPORTSMAN ON CALVARY

And when the Centurion which stood by over against Him, saw that He so cried out and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.—St. Mark xv. 39.

IF there is one thing more than another upon which the people on the margin of Christianity plume themselves, it is that they are broad-minded and free from all bias. That they never are. They are products of the Christian civilisation and they are standing aloof from the force which has shaped the fabric of their minds and, this being so, they can never look at it as detached and impartial outsiders. Their position is an unnatural one and gives them a distorted outlook. They feel an unreasonable contempt for the ideas upon which Christian

civilisation is based. They refuse, unreasonably, to give proper attention to the claims and history of the most fruitful religion mankind has ever practised. They show a singular reluctance to give proper attention to the Figure of Christ—the foundation figure of modern history. They show an unreasonable dislike for institutional Christianity as seen from the outside. They lay an unjust emphasis on the scandals of Christendom, and exhibit an unjust indifference to its triumphs.

The fact is that the people on the margin are biased by their own acts against Christ; they feel secretly that they have committed themselves to a repudiation of the allegiance demanded at their Baptism. And that is true. When they broke away from their baptismal allegiance, they put in motion a force which tends to carry them ever further from the centre. They are, in fact, in the grip of the same force which brought the Jews to crucify their own Redeemer.

There are no unbiased heathen in the countries of the Christian civilisation: to find them we must go far afield. But there were two unbiased heathen who were spectators of the Passion. One did not feel himself free to exhibit his impartiality, his name was Pontius Pilate: but the other was a free, because an honest, man, the centurion at the Cross.

The military virtues are the same in all ages, for they are those qualities and actions arising out of warfare which earn the instinctive praise of men. They were precisely the same in the Roman army of the first century as in the British army of the twentieth—fidelity, manliness, bravery, a self-sacrificing comradeship—but the attitude of the two armies towards their ideal is curiously, comically different. The British hate fighting and idolise games. They always like to think of the military virtues, not as they are exercised upon the battlefield, but as they are exercised upon

the playing-field, and they disguise their character under the name of sportsmanship. During the Great War the British soldier found he could bear it best by belittling the war, himself, and all his actions in terms of sport. Beholding the military virtues displayed in the sphere to which they belong, he still persisted in connecting them with his beloved games, and called upon his comrades to adorn the battlefield with the glories of the football-field.

The Roman soldier of the first century found his inspiration in battle in another way, for he was a far more fully developed human being. He realised that in the military virtues, fidelity, manliness, bravery, and a self-sacrificing comradeship, he had got hold of part of the cosmic secret. As he lay by his camp fire during a war on the Rhine, he thought of the war as an echo in miniature of the war of the universe. When he flung himself upon the Germans, he did not shout those magic words, Tottenham,

Wolverhampton, Aston Villa, he shouted, 'There is war in Heaven.' He did not reduce the military virtues to the dimensions of sport; he magnified them to cosmic proportions, sketched them vast upon the heavens, raised them to a religion, and proclaimed that in undying comradeship he had hit upon the most glorious fact of life. All through the years in which Christianity arose, the Roman army was carrying the religion of Mithras, the Unconquered Comrade, through the world, and thousands of soldiers were being disciplined in temperance, unselfishness, and chastity by its precepts.

What was this religion of the Unconquered Comrade? It was Persian in its origin. It conceived of the Ineffable as manifesting Himself in a personal Lord of Heaven and a personal mother earth, and of men as spirits descending from Heaven to occupy earthly bodies. It conceived of evil as a dark, malign force also issuing from the Ineffable, cast into Hell by the Lord

of Heaven, but partly breaking out and afflicting the lives of men. The cosmic situation therefore demands a deliverer for mankind, and he comes in the course of the ages, Mithras, the Unconquered Comrade. The follower of Mithras saw him in this way : he saw a broad river, a great rock, a dark cave within it, a wide spreading tree shadowing it, and then out of the substance of the rock there is slowly fashioned in the gloom of the cave a figure, and he steps forth into the sunshine. Young, strong, beautiful, a glorious youth with a Phrygian cap on his curling hair, wearing a tunic and gartered hose, a knife in his hand, he is going forth, the Divine Comrade of man, to slay the wild bull, the tormentor of mankind. He finds him on the plains, and all through the day Mithras struggles with the bull, slowly overcoming his strength with his hands until he gets him up to the door of the cave, and at length he draws his knife from his belt, and, averting his head from the sight of

what he is doing, he plunges the knife into the bull's heart. His task done, he ascends to Heaven. Presently he descends again, all glorious now, riding on a tamed, transfigured bull; this too he slays, fills a cup with its life blood—the Cup of Immortality—shares its contents with the men he has redeemed, and they enter immortal life and glory. The religion of Mithras excluded women. It was a secret bond of high spiritual endeavour, of unselfishness and good fellowship based on the inspiring thought that what men exhibit in their lives of these is a tiny reflection of a glorious Divine transaction on the spiritual plane.

We do not know that this was the centurion's religion, but we know that in so far as he was a religious man, his thoughts would run on such lines. Let us watch the Passion for a few moments through his eyes. He had heard of the provincial hero who was making a disturbance, of the Palm Procession, and of the serious riot in

the Temple when the market was broken up; he had heard that the authorities were determined to suppress Him, that there had come a revulsion of feeling, that the Man had been taken and His following had disappeared. On Good Friday morning, news reached the barracks that the case had gone to the procurator and would occupy only a few minutes. Then there was a curious delay. The entourage of the procurator assumed a solemn and puzzled air; it was said to be an awkward case, and that the procurator had sent it to Herod; after a while, the case came back: it was to be settled with a public humiliation and scourging.

There was a moment of real interest in the barracks when the news came that after all there was to be a crucifixion, and that a centurion and his men were to carry it out as expeditiously as possible, and that two brigands were to be crucified at the same time, outside the North-west Gate.

'Be quick, because of the wretched feast which is going on, and you have got to see that there is no riot.'

'I understand,' said the bored centurion, 'a crucifixion after a scourging—rather severe that'; and he looked curiously at Jesus when he saw Him, a slight, quiet figure in repose. 'Why do I feel that He could knock us all down and walk out if He liked? Odd I should feel that, because I see He has been so smashed up by the scourging that He can hardly walk at all. And yet how calm and stern He looks as He speaks to those weeping women. What does He say? A strong man, He ought to be a Roman.' Crash. 'What, He has fallen? He cannot carry the cross any further? I am not surprised, after a scourging. We must hurry on; here, catch that man and make him do it; now hasten.'

I imagine that it was the incident of the drugged wine which made the centurion

give the most serious attention to the central Figure. Probably he and the soldiers reasoned good-naturedly with Christ about the drugged wine, and that the centurion was profoundly moved by His attitude towards pain. It was probably at this moment that he began to suspect that some great mystery lay beneath it and beneath the whole scene.

From that time I see him scrutinising our Lord carefully, and getting all His words translated if he did not understand them. The first sound from the Cross revealed a conquest of resentment, like the conquest of pain; Christ seemed in some mysterious way to be suffering beyond all sufferers, and yet to be superior to all suffering. Then the robber spoke, and Jesus answered from the Cross in the tones of a king. Once more it grew upon the centurion that this extraordinary person occupied a position of authority in another sphere than this, and that all the while He

was reigning invisibly while He hung visibly.

Presently two figures came as near to Him as they could, and the bystanders said that one was His Mother. The centurion would watch this interview closely. Now the Man will break down. But no; again the King spoke: 'Lady, behold thy Son; behold thy Mother.' 'And these two,' muttered the centurion, 'are like Him; they are quite calm; He has imparted His curious powers of conquest to these people of His circle.' So, when the darkness gathered, and nature seemed to be veiling a mystery, and the nervous earthquake feeling was in the air, the centurion took up the position which the Evangelist describes as 'standing by over against the Cross,' and he must have felt, for the time, what the sentry at Pompeii felt when he stood stationary under the cloud of death.

We may be sure that during the three hours of darkness the centurion drew upon

all the deepest influences in his life—the best he knew of God and the best he knew of human life, perhaps some farm in the Sabine mountains where the old folk were living still, in the beautiful simplicity of the earlier days of Rome. For it was a grave and awakened man who came, when the darkness lifted, to look once more up to the Sufferer's face. '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.*' 'He is calling to comrades on that higher plane to which He has access.' '*It is finished.*' 'Then I am right: some mystery has been enacted in this crucifixion, to which I have not got the clue.'

He was standing now very near, and in a moment the light came. 'Father'—and the centurion, who was on foreign service, felt a pang of home-sickness pierce him at the word—'Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.' Still the centurion stood looking, after the strong victorious spirit had gone home. 'He has drunk the Cup of Immortality,' thought the centurion.

'I have seen the Unconquered Comrade. Truly this was a Son of God.'

On the margin of Christianity are many splendid men, who put the military virtues first. Why cannot they see what the centurion saw, why cannot they see in Christ the Divine manifestation of the military virtues? Why is He not to them what Mithras was to the Roman soldier—the Unconquered Comrade?

It seems to me that it all comes from the fact that the people on the margin are not pagan at all but renegade Christians. That is why they cannot look up and see the counterpart of their ideals in the heavens. That is why games have ceased to be the expression of a happy exuberance and lightheartedness under the radiance of a heavenly vision and have become ends in themselves. That is why the military virtues have come to be regarded as the ethics of sport, and so many of the thinkers among our soldiers have turned for their philosophy of life to

Fitzgerald's version of Omar Khayyám. Look at this picture and on this. First the Roman soldier of two thousand years ago looking up at the dead Christ and murmuring, 'Truly this was a Son of God,' and then the English officer of to-day, the baptised and confirmed follower of the Crucified, turning his face from the Crucified to solace himself with the philosophy of despair.

I sent my Soul through the invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And after many days my Soul returned
And said, Behold Myself am Heaven and Hell.

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
And Hell the Shadow of a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

We are no other than a moving row
Of visionary Shapes that come and go,
Round with this Sun-illumined lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show.

Impotent Pieces of the Game he plays
Upon the Chequer-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays;
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

No doubt that is the alternative to the vision of the Unconquered Comrade Who has materialised in the centre of the human scene, Who wears the crown of thorns

and bears the five wounds. And what an alternative!

Why cannot they see the Christ? Imperceptibly they have hardened against Him, and it will need a great effort to break up the hardness. They complain, you know, that they cannot see Him for the crowd of parsons and Churches and Christians standing in between. We cannot get out of the way, but we need not be so opaque; indeed, we can not only be transparent, but, if we give ourselves to our Lord, we can be, we are designed to be, media through whom Christ manifests Himself to men.

In the great epidemic of Asiatic cholera at Oxford, Charles Marriott, the saintly Vicar of St. Mary's, and Sister Marian of the Incarnation were bending over a woman who was expiring in agony and uttering torrents of blasphemy as she died: 'I do not believe in God, I do not believe in Christ.'

Then said Charles Marriott, 'Do you believe in Sister Marian?'

The poor thing was silent; presently she looked up and muttered, 'I believe in Sister Marian,' and she drew the Sister down and kissed her.

There was a long silence, then she whispered, 'I believe in God, Lord Jesus have mercy'—and died.

We have been thinking of the folk on the margin, we have bewailed the marginal spirit in ourselves. Let us pray through Passiontide that we may not hide Christ from the folk on the margin. We shall never do that if we belong heart and soul to the centre, for the centre is the Sacred Heart Itself.

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